

22



BT 75 .H54
Helffenstein, Samuel, 1775-
1866.
The doctrines of divine
revelation

22

4x

~~1.50~~



THE
DOCTRINES
OF
DIVINE REVELATION,
AS TAUGHT IN
THE HOLY SCRIPTURES,
EXHIBITED, ILLUSTRATED, AND VINDICATED.

DESIGNED FOR
THE USE OF CHRISTIANS GENERALLY,
AND FOR
YOUNG MEN, PREPARING FOR THE GOSPEL MINISTRY,
IN PARTICULAR.

BY THE REV.
SAMUEL HELFFENSTEIN, D. D.

PHILADELPHIA:
JAMES KAY, JUN. & BROTHER, 122 CHESTNUT STREET.
PITTSBURGH:—C. H. KAY & CO.

1842.

Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1842, by JAMES KAY, JUN.
& BROTHER, in the clerk's office of the district court of the United States in and
for the eastern district of Pennsylvania.

Printed and Bound by
JAMES KAY, JUN. & BROTHER,
122 Chestnut Street.

(2)

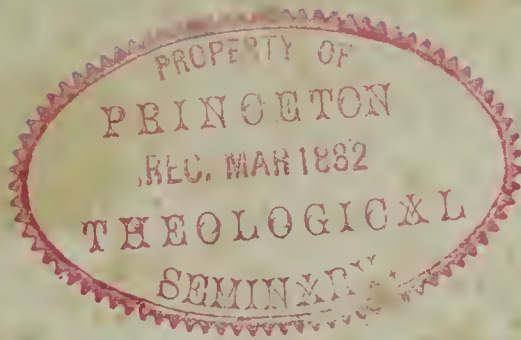
P R E F A C E .

THIS Work may be considered as a compend of Theology, and contains those doctrines which are generally believed and taught in the German Reformed Church in the United States of America. They were believed and taught by our forefathers in the ministry, who came over to this country from Germany, sent by the Synod of Holland; and are principally embraced in the Heidelberg Catechism, as the symbolical book of the German Reformed Church.

The object of the publication of this work is to put into the hands of young men preparing for the gospel ministry, a manual by which they may be guided, in an easy manner, to the acquirement of those theological truths, the knowledge of which is so indispensably necessary for a minister of the Gospel. The work may, however, be read and studied by Christians, generally; and with the blessing of God will be the means of making them acquainted with the doctrines of the Church, of increasing their knowledge and confirming their faith.

Originality is not claimed in this work; nothing more is presented than has already been exhibited and taught by eminent men on this subject: indeed, nothing original, properly speaking, can be produced on the subject of Theology.





CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.	
On Theology.....	PAGE 9
CHAPTER II.	
Sources of Theology : Reason.....	12
CHAPTER III.	
Sources of Theology : Revelation.....	16
CHAPTER IV.	
Evidences of Christianity.....	19
CHAPTER V.	
Evidences of Christianity.....	23
CHAPTER VI.	
Evidences of Christianity.....	28
CHAPTER VII.	
Evidences of Christianity.....	31
CHAPTER VIII.	
Evidences of Christianity.....	36
CHAPTER IX.	
Evidences of Christianity.....	40
CHAPTER X.	
Objections against Revelation and its records considered.....	44
CHAPTER XI.	
Inspiration of the Sacred Writers.....	54
CHAPTER XII.	
State of the Sacred Text.....	63
CHAPTER XIII.	
The Study and Interpretation of the Scriptures.....	68
CHAPTER XIV.	
On God : his Existence.....	73

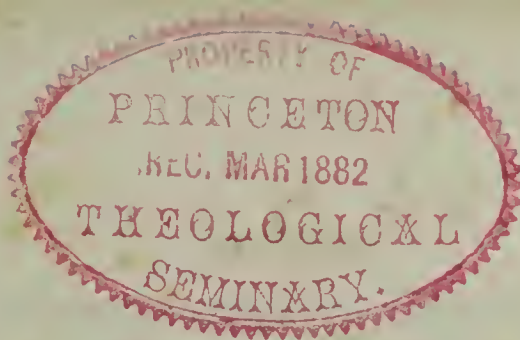
CHAPTER XV.	
On God: his Nature and Unity.....	80
CHAPTER XVI.	
The Eternity and Immutability of God.....	85
CHAPTER XVII.	
The Immensity and Omnipresence of God.....	91
CHAPTER XVIII.	
The Knowledge and Wisdom of God.....	96
CHAPTER XIX.	
The Holiness and Justice of God.....	106
CHAPTER XX.	
The Power and Goodness of God.....	114
CHAPTER XXI.	
The Truth and Faithfulness of God.....	123
CHAPTER XXII.	
On the Trinity.....	126
CHAPTER XXIII.	
On the Trinity.....	134
CHAPTER XXIV.	
On the Divinity of Christ.....	139
CHAPTER XXV.	
On the Divinity of the Holy Ghost.....	147
CHAPTER XXVI.	
On the Decrees of God.....	152
CHAPTER XXVII.	
On Predestination.....	157
CHAPTER XXVIII.	
On Creation.....	165
CHAPTER XXIX.	
On Angels.....	170
CHAPTER XXX.	
Man in his State of Innocence.....	182
CHAPTER XXXI.	
On Providence.....	187

CONTENTS.

vii

CHAPTER XXXII.	
On Providence.....	193
CHAPTER XXXIII.	
On the Fall of Man, and its Consequences.....	202
CHAPTER XXXIV.	
On the Fall of Man, and its Consequences.....	209
CHAPTER XXXV.	
On the Fall of Man, and its Consequences.....	217
CHAPTER XXXVI.	
Of Actual Sin, and the Punishment of Sin.....	225
CHAPTER XXXVII.	
On the Covenant of Grace.....	230
CHAPTER XXXVIII.	
On the Messiahship of Jesus.....	236
CHAPTER XXXIX.	
On the Incarnation of Christ.....	243
CHAPTER XL.	
On the Prophetical Office of Christ.....	253
CHAPTER XLI.	
On the Priestly Office of Christ.....	262
CHAPTER XLII.	
On the Priestly Office of Christ.....	272
CHAPTER XLIII.	
On the Kingly Office of Christ.....	279
CHAPTER XLIV.	
The Humiliation of Christ.....	285
CHAPTER XLV.	
The Exaltation of Christ.....	290
CHAPTER XLVI.	
On the Exaltation of Christ.....	298
CHAPTER XLVII.	
Vocation.....	303
CHAPTER XLVIII.	
Regeneration.....	306

	CHAPTER XLIX.	
Faith.....		311
	CHAPTER L.	
Justification.....		317
	CHAPTER LI.	
Sanctification.....		324
	CHAPTER LII.	
Perseverance.....		331
	CHAPTER LIII.	
On the Church.....		338
	CHAPTER LIV.	
The Sacraments : Baptism.....		348
	CHAPTER LV.	
The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.....		360
	CHAPTER LVI.	
On the Final State of Men.—The Death and Immortality of the Soul.....		366
	CHAPTER LVII.	
On the Resurrection.....		373
	CHAPTER LVIII.	
Judgment.....		380
	CHAPTER LIX.	
The Final State of the Righteous and the Wicked.....		386



THE DOCTRINES
OF
DIVINE REVELATION.

CHAPTER I.
ON THEOLOGY.

THEOLOGY literally signifies, a discourse concerning God. The term is derived from the ancient Greeks and Romans, and is compounded of two words, Θεος and Λογος.

The theology of the Pagans was of three kinds: Mythical, or that which treated of the Gods;—Physical, or that which the philosophers used when they spoke of or wrote on the subject of the Gods;—Civil, or that which related to public worship and its customs. Those who superintended and explained its usages were called priests. The Fathers in their writings used the term in a more restricted, and in a more extended sense. They make mention of the Theology of the Sacred Trinity, and of the Theology of the Son of God, or of the Divinity of our Saviour.

The term at other times denotes the general system of truth contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, or these scriptures themselves.

Theology may be defined, the science which treats of God, his nature, his attributes, his counsels, his works, and his dispensations towards the human race.

Theology claims the preference to all other studies. To ascertain the character of God in its aspects towards us; to contemplate the display of his attributes in his works and dispensations; to discover his designs towards man in his original state; to learn our duty to him, the means of enjoying his favour, the hopes which we are authorized to entertain, and

the wonderful expedient by which our fallen race is restored to purity and happiness; these are the objects of theology, and entitle it to be pronounced the first of all the sciences in dignity and importance, and may justly claim the preference to all other studies.

Theology may be distinguished into natural and supernatural: by natural theology is understood that knowledge of God, which the light of nature teaches, or which is acquired by our unassisted powers, by the exercise of reason and the suggestions of conscience.

The principal articles of natural theology are, that there is a supreme invisible being, possessed of certain perfections manifested by his works.

That this God is the creator and governor of the world.

That it is our duty to honour and please him by the practice of piety and justice and benevolence.

That the soul is immortal; and,

That there is a future state in which the righteous will be rewarded, and the wicked will be punished.

It has been disputed, not only whether these are the only articles, but also whether there is such a thing as natural theology; or, in other words, whether this system is discoverable by unassisted reason. The discussion of this subject, however, does not belong to this introductory chapter.

Supernatural theology is the system of religion which is contained in the Holy Scriptures; and is called supernatural, because the knowledge of it is not derived from reason, but from divine revelation. It incorporates the articles of natural theology, but likewise every other truth which cannot be discovered by the aid of reason.

Natural religion is not adapted to our circumstances, and our present state as sinners; it holds out no hope to the guilty; and in the present enfeebled and corrupt state of our moral powers, its duties are absolutely impracticable. Supernatural or Christian theology is distinguished into didactic, polemic, and practical.

Didactic theology explains the doctrines of religion, and states the proofs or the arguments by which their truth is evinced.

Polemic theology considers the controversies respecting these doctrines, and replies to the objections of adversaries.

Practical theology points out the improvement which should be made of the doctrines; or the duties we owe to God, ourselves, and men.

The qualifications which are indispensably necessary to a student of theology, are,

First, piety. While the student is labouring to store his mind with knowledge which is to be communicated to others, it should be his first care to convert it by faith and prayer to his own use. Destitute of piety, we cannot claim the divine blessing on our studies; our knowledge will only be superficial and literal; it will administer no consolation to our minds, and only serve to aggravate our guilt and condemnation; for "the servant that knows his master's will, and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes."

Secondly, a competent share of human learning is likewise necessary. Individuals may sometimes be found who have not enjoyed the advantages of a regular education, who are, and have been useful as public teachers: but such instances are rare; an unlearned ministry will be neither respectable nor useful. The more learning a man has, provided it is sanctified, the more useful he will be in the gospel ministry. In this view, it may justly be said, *philosophia theologiæ ancillatur*. Philosophy is the handmaid, although not the mistress of theology. A third qualification necessary to a student of theology is the love of truth, or a sincere desire to know the will of God, leading to candour and diligence in our studies. As the will of God is contained in the Scriptures, it must be the duty of a student of theology to read and reflect on them, in order to ascertain the mind of God. It is not meant that he should not have recourse to human aid, but while he consults the opinions of others, let him remember that they are fallible, and in themselves of no authority, but that his ultimate appeal should be to the Scriptures, by which alone the question of truth and error can be decided in religion.

CHAPTER II.

SOURCES OF THEOLOGY: REASON.

THE sources from which we derive our knowledge of Theology, are reason and revelation.

Reason signifies, in this place, the intellectual and moral faculties of man, exercised without any supernatural assistance in the investigation of religion.

There are two senses in which reason may be understood; first, reason may signify the high intellectual ability with which man was endowed at his creation, and which we may conceive to have been sufficient to direct him in his original state, as instinct is to direct the lower animals, both being perfect in their kind. Or, reason may signify the intellectual powers of man in his present state, corrupted by the fall. It is in the last sense we make use of the term.

It is not a reflection upon the wisdom of God, to say that reason in its present state is insufficient to direct men in the paths of duty, any more than it is to assert that an eye, which in consequence of disease does not see at all, or sees imperfectly, is unfit for the purposes for which it was originally intended.

Let us review some of the doctrines of natural religion, that we may see what is the result of its researches.

First, As it respects the character of God: The first principle of religion is the existence of God, who made us, and to whom we owe homage and obedience. That there is such a Being may be known from the works of creation and providence. Although the ancients were acquainted with this truth, yet their notions of it were exceedingly imperfect and erroneous, and hence made no impression on their minds. The idea of what was called the personality of the Deity, or his distinct substance, was in a great measure unknown to them. The Deity was considered, not so much an intelligent Being, as an animated power diffused throughout the world, giving motion

to that passive matter which was considered coeval and co-existing with himself. In practice, they were idolaters, and paid religious honours to the numberless train of gods and goddesses acknowledged by the vulgar. The Jews were the only nation upon earth who were acquainted with, and worshipped the true and living God; the rest of mankind were sunk in the grossest ignorance and idolatry. Every object was mistaken for God; every part of the universe was deified; insomuch, that the gods of Greece, where the arts and sciences flourished, amounted to thirty thousand. In modern India, we are told, the number is still greater. Such are the achievements of reason with respect to the character of God.

In the second place, it is the office of religion to inform us of our relations to God, as our Creator and Governor. We believe that all things were made by his Almighty power; and that his providence is over all. Unassisted reason never arrived at this conclusion, that the universe had a beginning; nor when it was suggested did it obtain its assent. Some heathen philosophers believed that the universe was eternal, both in matter and in form; and that the human race had no beginning, and would have no end. Others maintained that the present order of things had a beginning; but they attributed it to accident — to the fortuitous concourse of atoms, which, floating up and down in infinite space, united themselves at last in the present regular system; others, again, imagined God to be the soul, or vital principle diffused throughout the universe, and giving life and motion to its various parts. Although they distinguished him from the universe, they did not believe that he made it; but only that he reduced the wild chaotic mass into order. They all believed that matter was co-eternal with the deity, and only thus far dependent upon him; that his power was exerted in moving and arranging it.

It is not surprising that those who so much mistook the nature of the Deity, as the Creator of the world, should entertain no just ideas of his government of it, and deny his providence. Hence, the followers of Epicurus represented the gods as indolent—reposing in undisturbed felicity—beholding with indifference the concerns of mortals; others again expressed them-

selves on this subject with more accuracy and sublimity. "This is the principal thing of religion towards the gods," says Epictetus, "to form right conceptions of them, as existing and administering all things well and justly; to obey them, and acquiesce in all things that happen, as being under the conduct of the most excellent mind." But the elevated language of the Stoics loses much of its value, when we reflect upon their doctrine of Fate, by which all things were necessarily controlled, and to which gods and men were compelled to yield. The vulgar acknowledged the dominion of the gods by their prayers and thanksgiving, and other religious services; but they at the same time believed their power to be limited by irresistible necessity.

In the next place, as it respects the subject of morality, we must acknowledge, that the discoveries of reason have been more successful. Some of the heathen philosophers have composed admirable treatises of morality, although very imperfect. In the moral systems of philosophers, some duties of great importance are omitted, and some things, which they call virtues, when brought to the Christian standard, turn out to be vices. For instance, they despised humility, allowed revenge and suicide, and many other vices, of which Christianity speaks with abhorrence. The motives by which the morality of the heathen was enforced wanted authority, and were not of sufficient efficacy to counteract the innate propensity to evil, and to overcome the temptations to which men are daily exposed. Hence a general depravity of manners prevailed among the ancient Gentiles, and still prevails among modern heathens, to an alarming degree.

Lastly, what was the result with respect to the immortality of the soul? The common people believed that the soul survived the death of the body, and that there was a future state of rewards and punishments; but they could give no reason for their belief, but the authority of their ancestors, or popular writers, especially the poets.

Philosophers endeavoured to prove the immortality of the soul by argument: though some of their arguments are good, yet they are not satisfactory; but weak, obscure, and fanciful.

Hence the immortality of the soul was denied by some ; others, who expressly taught this doctrine, spoke of it with doubt and uncertainty. Thus, Socrates, shortly before his death, tells his friends, "I hope I am now going to good men, though this I would not take upon me peremptorily to assert." "It is time," he says to his judges, "for us to depart, that I may die, and you may live ; to which of us it shall be better, is unknown to all but God." Cicero, who is considered the most eminent of these philosophers who argued for the immortality of the soul, laboured under the same uncertainty as others did ; speaking of the several opinions concerning the nature and duration of the soul, he says ; "which of these is true, God alone knows, and which is most probable, a very great question." Again he says ; "When I read, I assent, but when I have laid down the book, all that assent vanishes." All which gave Seneca just occasion to say, that "Immortality, however desirable, was rather promised than proved by those great men."

From what has been said on the result of the inquiries of reason, in respect to the doctrines of natural theology, we learn that it is on all these subjects defective, and entirely insufficient to instruct mankind in religion ; and, as it respects supernatural theology, is altogether useless ; like the eye, which is capable of perceiving objects which are not far off, but cannot discern those which lie beyond the abyss of space, unless assisted by art.

Supernatural theology is founded on that mysterious distinction in the divine essence, the Trinity, and on the divine councils respecting our fallen race of which no trace can be looked for in creation. What purpose, then, does reason serve, if insufficient ? I answer ;

Its first office is to judge of the evidence of religion ; and, while thus engaged, it not only collects proofs from observation and experience, in favour of the doctrines of natural religion, but examines the grounds or evidences upon which any new doctrine is said to be a divine communication. There are two ways in which this examination may be conducted : we may compare the system which demands our assent with our prior conceptions of the divine character and will, in order to ascer-

tain whether it harmonizes with them; because sound reason and a genuine revelation cannot contradict each other: or we may consider the character of the publishers of the system, the nature of their testimony, and the works to which they appeal, in attestation of their mission; of all which reason is a competent judge.

The second office of reason is to examine the contents of revelation, to ascertain the sense of the words and phrases in which it is expressed, to trace the relation of its parts, and to draw out, in regular order, the system of doctrines and duties which it teaches. Reason is not a judge of religion, but only the means by which we investigate the doctrines of religion, and judge of the proofs on which they are founded.



CHAPTER III.

SOURCES OF THEOLOGY: REVELATION.

REVELATION signifies information supernaturally communicated.

A revelation is possible. He who imparted to man a certain degree of light, by endowing him with intellectual powers, might impart to him a higher degree by some other means. In doing so, he would only act a similar part, to a person of superior acquirements and talents, who should make known to his pupils by oral instruction certain recondite truths, which their utmost efforts could not have discovered.

Revelation is to the mind what a glass is to the eye, whether it be intended to correct some accidental defect in the structure, or to extend its power of vision beyond its natural limits.

God, when he gave man understanding, did not exert himself to the utmost of his power, nor did he come under an obligation never to enlarge this faculty, or to furnish it with extraordinary assistance. Revelation does not imply a reflection upon the original work of God, as if he had made an intel-

ligent creature, but afterwards found that the degree of intelligence was not adequate to the purpose of his being.

Reason, in its pure state, was perfectly sufficient for all the ends which it was intended to accomplish. The necessity of revelation arises from a new state of things, superinduced by man himself.

But how could a person be certain that he had received a revelation, and not a dream or fancy? Enthusiasts, led by a wild imagination, and persons in a frenzy or fear, are as fully satisfied of the reality of the things represented to them, as those whose senses are clear and perfect, and whose reason is in its full vigour; how, then, could the prophets and apostles be so confident as they were, that God had in reality made a revelation to them? We answer: there is much imposture in the world; is this an argument that there is no truth? Many persons are deceived, therefore can no man know that he is in the right? Cannot God not only communicate his will to the mind of an individual, but also convince him that it is a communication from himself?

It has been objected, though a person might be convinced that a revelation comes from God, how can he assure others that he is not deceived? We reply; might not God enable him to give such signs to others, as should satisfy them that he is his messenger?

Some infidels argue as if miracles were impossible; and others maintain that they are not sufficient to prove a revelation, upon this ground, that there is no necessary connexion between truth and power. In answering these objections, your attention will be called in a subsequent chapter, "on miracles."

A revelation is desirable, because of the insufficiency of human reason to give satisfactory information respecting the doctrines of natural religion, as is evident from what you have heard in the preceding chapter; desirable, though it had gone no further than to solve those doubts, and to shed light upon the doctrines of natural religion. The heathen were sensible of this, and expressed a desire that some one would appear to instruct mankind, as is evident from the writings of Plato and

Socrates; desirable, though reason were capable of discovering all the truths of natural religion; if reason were capable, it would not follow that they were so obvious as to be discovered without any labour. There are no innate ideas in the human mind which we perceive intuitively as soon as reason begins to dawn; all our knowledge is derived from observation and experience. Hence it is evident, that a revelation would facilitate the acquisition of knowledge to all, and particularly to those whose intellectual faculties were originally not strong, and had not been improved by education, and whose daily occupations afforded them little leisure for inquiry and reflection.

A revelation is necessary, because we are not only ignorant, but also guilty; we are sinners, and condemned by the law of nature; we are weak and helpless, and unable to satisfy the demands of the law, and hence stand in need of a Saviour. Let us, before concluding this chapter, inquire what we might previously expect to be the nature and character of a divine revelation:

First, we might expect it to contain all the information which man wants as a moral and accountable being.

Secondly, we might expect a revelation to deliver its instructions rather in an authoritative than in an argumentative manner.

Lastly, we might expect that there would be some difficulties in a divine revelation. Revelation speaks of the things of God; and how could they be made plain to our understanding? Language being the vehicle of human thought, could not convey a distinct account of subjects which the human faculties are unable to comprehend. Revelation demands faith; and pure faith is an act of the mind, by which it assents to certain facts, upon the authority of testimony, without having any other evidence of their truth. Hence we may conceive a great moral purpose to be served, by the difficulties which are found in revelation; they call for docility and humble submission to divine authority; and wherever these tempers are, revelation will be cordially received: but the men who are elated by the pride of science will not stoop to authority, and will refuse to believe what they cannot comprehend.

CHAPTER IV.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

HAVING shown in a preceding chapter that a revelation is possible; that it is desirable and necessary; and having noticed its probable character, we proceed to consider, whether a revelation has actually been given. We would previously observe that pretensions to revelation have been common, of which we have examples in the Sibylline oracles of the Romans, and the sacred books of the Persians and Hindoos; but it is not necessary to examine their claims, since, with one consent, they are acknowledged to be impostures.

The revelation of which we are speaking is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament; and that these are faithful records, can be known only by ascertaining that they are genuine; that they are the writings of the persons whose names they bear. This leads to a proof of their authenticity. When we call a writing genuine, we mean that it is really the composition of the person whom it claims as author. When we call it authentic, we mean that its contents are true; that it possesses authority to command belief. These qualities are by no means inseparable. A book may be genuine which is not authentic, because it contains fictions and falsehoods. On the other hand, a book may be authentic although it was written by a different person from its reputed author. But genuineness and authenticity are inseparably connected in the sacred writings.

The necessity of ascertaining their genuineness will be manifest, if we reflect that they contain miracles; but how do we know that the miracles were really performed? This is one argument, that the books were published at the time of the miracles, and were then received; for it is evident, if the miracles had not been really wrought, the narrative would have been rejected as fabulous. They contain prophecies; but whether these are to be considered as true predictions, can be

determined only by the fact, that the books were written prior to the events which they profess to foretell.

Let us begin with the Scriptures of the Old Testament. We observe that they existed in the days of our Saviour and his immediate followers, as appears from his references to them under the titles of the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, and from the numerous quotations from them, by the evangelists and apostles. Josephus, who wrote in the first century, informs us, that the Jews had twenty-two sacred books: five of Moses, thirteen of the Prophets, and four containing hymns and moral precepts. Having found the Jewish Scriptures in the days of our Saviour, we can trace them two or three hundred years back; to the time when they were translated into Greek. The version is known by the name of the Septuagint, and was probably undertaken by the Jews in Egypt; who, not understanding the Scriptures in the vernacular tongue, were anxious to have them translated into the Greek, to be used in their synagogues.

Further, the Jewish Scriptures existed in the days of Ezra, about which time the canon was completed by the writings of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

As it respects the law of Moses, we can trace it back within a few years after his death. In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, numerous references are made to it. During the time of the captivity, express mention is made of it by Daniel in his solemn prayer and confession. Daniel ix. 11, 12. During the reign of Josiah, not long before the captivity, a copy was found in the temple, and very probably was the autograph of Moses, from the excitement it caused, and the impression it made by its contents. 2 Kings xxii. 8. We can trace it in the reign of Hezekiah. 2 Chron. xxx. 16. In the reign of Jehoshaphat. 2 Chron. xvii. 9. In the reign of David and Solomon. 1 Kings xi. 3. During the succession of judges, the law was the rule according to which they governed the people. Joshua xxiii. 6.

The repeated references which are made to the law of Moses, furnish sufficient evidence that it existed, not as a tradition, but in writing from his time down to the close of the Old Testament Scriptures.

We cannot, it is true, produce testimonies that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch from contemporary writers. If there were any at that remote period, their works and memories have perished. The Jews were always an obscure nation: can it then be reasonably expected, that we should obtain positive testimony concerning them from foreign historians, when the most ancient of these, whose works remain, lived more than a thousand years posterior to Moses? Such profane testimony as can be produced, serves only to show what was the prevailing opinion among heathens; and when we find them not only recording many facts in the narrative of Moses, but speaking of him by name, and referring to his law, we conclude that no doubt was entertained, that he was the lawgiver of the Jews, and that his writings were genuine. Diodorus, Siculus, Strabo, Tacitus, Juvenal, and Longinus, make mention of him and his writings.

Infidels object, that the books of Moses were of a more recent date. But we ask, at what time were they composed and published? Did they appear immediately after the death of Moses? Their contents were either true or false. Suppose they were true; in this case, the argument in favour of the Jewish religion is the same as if they had been written by Moses himself. But let us suppose them to be false; if so, it was impossible that they could have been received, or have gained credit, because, in this case, every person was a competent judge, whether the things related to have taken place, within his own memory, had really happened. Would the Israelites have believed that the Red Sea was divided; that they had journeyed forty years in the wilderness; that during this time a miraculous cloud had covered them by day, and a fire had illuminated their dwellings by night; that they had been supported with food which daily fell around the camp; that God published his law with an audible voice, and punished the violation of it with terrible plagues? They would not have believed all these things if the whole narrative had been a fiction.

Again: It is pretended that the Pentateuch was published as the genuine work of Moses at a later period, when there were

none to contradict its statements from personal experience. But would the Israelites have received it stamped with the venerated name of Moses, their ancient deliverer? Would they not have demanded proof that the laws emanated from him, or from God by his instrumentality? Would they have suffered themselves to be imposed upon, unless we suppose them to be deprived of reason and common sense? "How does it appear," they would have said, "that these are the genuine laws of the man whose name they bear? If they are really his laws, how came it to pass that our fathers did not receive them! In what archives were they deposited? In what secret place have they so long lain concealed? How came you to discover them? And what evidence do you produce to convince us that they were not fabricated by yourself?" To these questions the impostor would have been able to return no satisfactory answer.

There is a manifest impossibility that the writings of Moses could have been imposed on the Israelites as his genuine productions, in any posterior age. The argument becomes stronger when we consider the nature of the laws which, according to the hypothesis, were imposed upon the Israelites. These laws no nation would have received, on the ground of a mere pretence that they were delivered by a legislator who had many years before been laid in the grave.

The Book of Joshua is understood to have been written by himself, with the exception of a few verses in the end, giving an account of his death.

The Book of Judges is attributed to Samuel, who also, most probably, wrote the Book of Ruth, which may be considered as a supplement to it. Samuel is also supposed to have written the first twenty-four chapters of the book which bears his name, and by us divided into two; the rest being added by the prophets Gad and Nathan. This opinion is founded upon First Chronicles, chap. twenty-ninth, twenty-ninth verse.

The two Books of Kings are supposed to have been made up from annals or histories, composed by different persons, of which mention is made in the Chronicles. The Book of Ezra was written by himself; and Nehemiah was the author of the book which bears his name.

The Book of Esther is ascribed to Ezra, or Mordecai, or to distinguished persons of the Great Synagogue.

The Book of Job is a true history, and was the work either of Job himself, or of Moses.

The Book of Psalms bears the name of David, solely, however, because a considerable part of it was composed by him. It contains the poetical compositions of different persons, some of which were written before, and others after his time. They were probably collected by Ezra.

The books attributed to Solomon are generally admitted to be genuine.

In regard to the prophetical books there can be no uncertainty, as their names are prefixed to their respective works.

I shall conclude with a few remarks upon the Apocryphal books. These do not belong to the inspired writings of the Old Testament, for the following reasons:

They were not acknowledged by the Jews, so as to be classed with the books which they held sacred, as appears from the testimony of Josephus. They were never cited by Christ or his apostles. Some of them were written in Greek, and consequently not in Judea, where a different language was spoken after as well as before the captivity; and finally, they contain fabulous accounts, and are chargeable with contradictions. Their exclusion from the canon by the Jews places them on a level with other human compositions.

CHAPTER V.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE genuineness of the writings of the New Testament is connected with their authenticity. Hence the subject of inquiry is, whether they were written in the age when Jesus Christ is said to have appeared, and to have performed the miracles which are ascribed to him; or were composed and published

at a subsequent period. Let us proceed to give an account of the books.

That Matthew was the writer of the gospel which bears his name, and that it was the first which appeared, are facts supported by the uniform testimony of antiquity. With respect to the time of its publication, some have assigned it to the year 61, 62, 63 or 64, others to the year 41, 43 or 48; and others, again, to the year 37 or 38. The year 38 is perhaps the probable date.

Concerning the language in which this gospel was written, there have been different opinions in modern times. Some have said that it was written in Hebrew; others, that the original was in Greek.

To reconcile these two opinions, we may say, that Matthew published his gospel both in Hebrew and in Greek; in Hebrew, for the use of the Jews living in Judea, and in Greek, for the use of Jews and Gentiles in other countries; or we may suppose that his gospel was translated into Hebrew, and that in process of time the translation was taken for the original.

The next gospel was written by Mark. Mark was not an apostle, but is said to have been the constant attender of Peter, and to have composed his narrative with his approbation. The date of this gospel should be fixed somewhere about the year 60. It is the voice of antiquity that it was written in Greek.

The writer of the third Gospel was Luke, a native of Antioch, descended from Jewish parents, and by profession a physician. Luke was a companion of Paul, and a witness of many things, which he relates concerning that apostle in the Acts. The time when he published his Gospel is about the year 53 or 63; and the place where it was written was in Achaia or Syria, or Palestine. All antiquity agrees in ascribing it to Luke. The superiority of the style, which approaches nearer to the classical standard, has given rise to the idea that he had been better educated than the other evangelists.

The last Gospel was written by John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. Some maintain that it was written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, about the year 68, 69 or 70; others consider it posterior to the fall of the holy city, about the year

97, after John returned from Patmos, to which he was banished by the Emperor Domitian. If we adopt this date, the gospel is the last book of the New Testament, and not the Revelation.

One important design which he had in view, was to confute the erroneous dogmas of various heretics, the Ebionites, the Cerinthians, and the Nicolaitans, concerning the person of Christ.

The writer of the Acts of the Apostles was Luke, as appears from the first chapter and first verse. The history in the Acts comes down to the end of the two years of Paul's imprisonment; soon after which he was set at liberty, in the year 63.

The design of Luke was not to give a complete account of the propagation of the Gospel, but to show, that in obedience to the command of our Saviour, it was published, first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles.

The Epistles have been divided into two classes, the Epistles of Paul and the Catholic Epistles. Those of Paul are fourteen in number, but are not placed in the order in which they were written. The Epistle to the Romans stands first, because it was addressed to the inhabitants of the capital; and then follow two Epistles to the Christians of Corinth, a large and flourishing city of Greece.

The two Epistles to the Thessalonians, however, preceded all the rest, and if they had been arranged according to their respective dates, would have stood first. The Epistles of James and Jude, the two Epistles of Peter, and the three of John, were called Catholic, because they are not addressed to particular churches and individuals, but to Christians in every part of the world; but there is an obvious error in this statement. The second and third Epistles of John ought to have been excluded from the number, since the former is addressed to a person whom he calls the elect lady, and the latter to Gaius. Even then the order would have been inaccurate. The first Epistle of Peter is addressed to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, and not to the whole society of Christians in the world; and the Epis-

tle of James was sent to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, and consequently is not more Catholic than the Epistle to the Hebrews.

It is not my design at present to give a summary of the contents of the Epistles; but I shall confine myself to a brief notice of the time when each is supposed to have been written. The most probable date of the Epistle to the Romans is the year 57 or 58. The first Epistle to the Corinthians was written in the year 56 or 57, and the second in the following year. The date of the Epistle to the Galatians has been assigned almost to every year between 48 and 52.

The Epistle to the Ephesians was written during Paul's imprisonment in Rome, probably in the year 61.

The Epistle to the Philippians was written while Paul was in bonds; but whether during his first or second imprisonment, is doubtful. The two Epistles to the Thessalonians were written about the year 52. The date of the first Epistle to Timothy has been fixed to the years 57 and 64. The second, which was written during the first or second imprisonment, has been referred to 65. It is not known when, or where, the Epistle to Titus was composed; probably from 52 to 65. Paul was in Rome when he sent his letter to Philemon, about the year 62.

The antiquity of the Epistle to the Hebrews is acknowledged, although its genuineness has been disputed, on account of the omission of the names and the difference of style. It is, however, attributed to him at an early period by Clemens Alexandrinus, and finally was acknowledged as his production by the Catholic church. There are also internal proofs that Paul was the author, consisting in its similarity to his other epistles, in expressions, allusions, and modes of interpreting and applying passages of the Old Testament. It was sent from Italy about the year 62 or 63.

The genuineness of the Catholic epistles, with the exception of the first Epistle of Peter and the first of John, was for a time called in question by some; but, upon accurate examination, they were received as genuine. The Epistle of James was written in the year 61; the first of Peter, in the year 62; and

the second, not long after 65. Various dates have been assigned to the first Epistle of John, from the year 68 to 92. The second and third have been referred to the year 69. The Epistle of Jude has been assigned to the year 70.

The last book of the New Testament is the Revelation of John. Its genuineness was called in question by some in the third and fourth centuries; but it was received at an early period as the work of the Apostle. Polycarp, who was his disciple, has cited it once, in A. D. 140. Justin Martyr acknowledged it as his; and Irenæus, who was the disciple of Polycarp, repeatedly quotes it as the production of John. To these may be added many others, who lived in the second century. The Revelation was omitted in several of the catalogues of the canonical books; but the reason seems to have been that, on account of its obscurity, it was not deemed proper to be read publicly. The book may be dated about the year 96.

The apocryphal books, which in former times were numerous, have been rejected as spurious; they were, for weighty reasons, considered as human compositions, and never received into the canon. We have no reason to believe that any book, which the evangelists or apostles wrote for the permanent use of the church, has been lost, because no hint of this kind has been given by those who, living near the time, had the best opportunity of knowing. Much that was spoken by inspiration was never recorded; for the apostles, we believe, were assisted by the spirit in preaching as well as in writing, and it is not to be doubted that they sent letters to individuals and to societies, which did not long survive the occasions which they were intended to serve. We have no reason to believe that all that the inspired men wrote was to be preserved, any more than all that they spoke. It is enough that we have all the books which were considered by the primitive Christians as constituting the perpetual rule of faith and practice.

CHAPTER VI.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

IN this chapter we proceed to consider the evidences by which it is proved that the books of the New Testament are genuine; or that they were written by the persons whose names they bear. The evidences are either external or internal. At the same time I refer you, in particular, to *Jones*, in his new and full method of settling the canonical authority of the New Testament; and to *Lardner*, in the second part of his *Credibility of the Gospel History*.

That the books of the New Testament are genuine, is evident from the testimony of early writers. The principal writers on this subject are, *Eusebius* and *Jerome*, of the fourth century; *Origen*, of the third century; *Justin the Martyr*, and *Irenæus*, Bishop of Lyons, of the second century; and *Polycarp*, *Clement*, *Barnabas*, and *Hermas*, of the first century. All these writers refer in their writings to the Gospels and Epistles, and quote from them. It is a well-known fact, that in the third and following centuries, they were regarded as the writings of those under whose names they were current in the world.

Catalogues of the books of the New Testament were drawn up by different persons, from which it appears that the same books were then received which are at present acknowledged. These catalogues—of *Origen*, in the year 210—of *Eusebius*, in the year 315—of *Cyril of Jerusalem*, A. D. 340—the catalogue of the Council of *Laodicea*, and many others, all agree with ours, and were the same, except that some hesitated to include the Epistle of *James* and *Jude*, the *Hebrews*, and the *Revelation*; but they were finally all included. Additional evidence is furnished by the heretics who arose in the early ages.

Cerinthus lived at the same time with the Apostle *John*. The *Ebionites* were contemporary with the apostles. *Marcion* lived in the beginning of the second century. *Basilides*, and the *Valentinians*, existed about the same time. *Paul* of

Samosata, Sabellus, the Novatians, Donatists, Manichees, the Arians, and many other sects, received most or all of the books of the New Testament, though they explained them according to their own notions.

There is still another source from which we are furnished with evidence in favour of the antiquity and genuineness of the books of the New Testament; namely, the testimony of early infidels. I refer to Celsus, a bitter enemy of Christianity in the latter part of the second century; Porphyry, in the third, and Julian the Apostate, in the fourth century. These enemies of Christianity had no suspicion that the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles were forgeries; instead of disputing the genuineness of them, they admit many of the facts recorded in them, and even the miracles of Christ. Thus we prove the genuineness of the books of the New Testament, by the testimony of those who had the best opportunity of knowing whether they were written by the Apostles.

The last argument in favour of these books is founded upon the Syriac version. This version was probably made in the first century; and as four Catholic Epistles, the second of Peter, the second and third of John, and the Epistle of Jude, are wanting, and also the Revelation, it is supposed that at the time these books had not appeared. If this early date be assigned to them, it proves that not only the other books were then in existence, but that they were considered as the productions of the Evangelists and Apostles; for it could only be on this supposition that they were translated for the use of the Syrian churches.

The books of the New Testament contain internal marks, from which it appears that they were written in the age to which they referred, and by the persons to whom they are ascribed. The first is the style:

The books profess to have been written by Jews, who lived in Judea, a short time before the destruction of Jerusalem. They were written in Greek, but the native tongue of the writers was Hebrew, or more correctly the Syro-Chaldaic. Now, this language had not only its peculiar words, but also its peculiar idioms, which a person who had been accustomed

to from his infancy would retain after he had laid aside the use of the words.

Knowing, then, to what nation the writers belonged, what might we have presumed, *à priori*, would be the nature of their style? We might have presumed that the words would be in Greek, but that the idiom would be Hebrew; or that the composition would be that of persons who thought in one language and wrote in another, and this is exactly the character of the Gospels and Epistles. This, then, is an internal proof of the genuineness of the books. Their composition accords with the character and circumstances of the reputed authors. Had the language been classical, there would have been some ground of suspicion, and the style would have been adduced as a proof that they were not the works of the Apostles and Evangelists.

The second internal evidence of the genuineness of the books, is simplicity, or the absence of all appearance of art. The manifest purpose of the Gospels is to give a narrative of the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ; of the works which he performed, and the doctrines which he taught. Now there is evidence, on the face of them, that they were drawn up as the events took place, or as they occurred to the recollection of the writers, without any studied design to combine them into a well-digested history, or to produce a particular effect.

They relate facts as they occurred; and, believing them to be true, they leave them to speak for themselves, without any comment upon them. In the Epistles there is the same simplicity or artlessness.

The third evidence of the genuineness of the books, is their peculiarity. There is in them such a specification of names, places, and facts, as affords sufficient ground for concluding that they were written by the apostles.

The fourth internal evidence is furnished by the discrepancies between the Gospels. There are differences in their accounts, which have been considered, by some, as amounting to express contradictions. These differences may easily be reconciled; this, however, is not our present business: we will

only observe, that they serve to prove the genuineness of their writings, because it shows that each of them set down events as they appeared to him at the time, or afterwards occurred to his recollection, without consulting with any others. In a word, they show that they did not act in concert, with a design to deceive.

CHAPTER VII.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE genuineness and authenticity of the sacred writings, as we stated in a former Chapter, are inseparably connected; that is, the genuineness infers their authenticity.

The books were narratives of events which are said to have taken place, in the age, and before the eyes of the persons who were called to receive them as authentic. Every person was at once competent to decide whether what was related was true or false. Many of the events were miraculous, and were designed to attest a religion in which the future hopes of mankind should be founded, and by which their present conduct should be regulated. In such a case, I ask, would men yield a listless assent; or would they be satisfied with evidence which they knew to be false? Would the Israelites have received the laws of Moses, which were so cumbersome? Would they have submitted to all the rites enjoined by Moses, which were to be practised not only in the sanctuary, but in the whole detail of life, and which required constant attention, and must have been extremely inconvenient? How could Moses have prevailed upon them to receive these laws and precepts? How would he ever expect to gain his end, while he asserted, in order to enforce them, that the law was from God? I reply, he appealed to evidence, and the evidence was miraculous. The reception of the law, then, is a proof that the people were convinced of the authority of Moses to impose it; or, in other words, that the law emanated from the God of their fathers, and consequently is a proof that they witnessed the miracles in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness.

Thus the genuineness proves the authenticity of the books, or the truth of the religion contained in them. They were published at the time to which they are assigned, and consequently would not have been received, if the events recorded in them had not actually happened.

The same reasoning may be employed to prove the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, and especially the historical. It is a well-known fact, that the religion of Christ had many difficulties to encounter, in the beginning, both from Jews and Gentiles. The prejudices of the Jews were entirely opposed to the person, character, and kingdom of Christ; and the philosophy of the Greeks stood in opposition to the doctrines, precepts, and claims of the religion of Christ. High and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, were of one opinion in opposing and doing all in their power to prevent its success in the world. In this state of things the religion of the Redeemer was presented to mankind in the discourses of the Apostles, and in the written records which have been transmitted to us. By what means did it gain credit; and how did it prevail over the difficulties and opposition it had to encounter? The books tell us that sufficient evidence was furnished, both by the author and the preachers of the religion, in the miracles which they performed in Judea and in other countries; they specify frequently, the time when, the place where, and the persons on whom the miracles were wrought. What is more, the very persons to whom some of the books are addressed, are appealed to as witnesses of the miracles. In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul says to them: "Truly, the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds;" 2 Cor. xii. 12; and in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he mentions it as an unquestionable fact, that when the Gospel was preached to them, God bore the preachers witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." Heb. xi. 4.

These assertions are either true or false. If they were false, how could the apostle venture to make them? Had he lost his senses? Was he a raving visionary, who mistook the illusions

of fancy for realities? No. He was in a sound mind, and expected what he wrote to be received with respect. If they were true, then we have a satisfactory solution of the problem how the books, and the religion taught in them, came to be received; but it is impossible to explain the fact upon any other hypothesis. If those that lived in that age saw miracles, and if others, as the apostle affirms in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, had received miraculous gifts, they could not doubt the truth of the system in support of which the miracles were wrought; but if they did not see or receive them, how were they persuaded? A miracle is a supernatural work — an effect which could not be produced by the laws of nature.

Miracles are possible. God, who is almighty, and of infinite power, who established and upholds the laws of nature, can, most assuredly, if he please, suspend their operation, and act contrary to them. But it may be asked, would not a deviation from these laws, which he has established for the government of the world, be inconsistent with his wisdom? We reply; that the wisdom of God will always be in agreement with that infinite benevolence which is essential to his nature. If, therefore, the good of his creatures can on certain occasions be better promoted by deviating from the established laws of nature than by adhering to them, it will be consistent to deviate, and work miracles.

None but God can perform miracles; for if a miracle be an effect which cannot be produced by the laws of nature, we are compelled to have recourse to the immediate power of God for the cause. It is acknowledged that there are some passages of Scripture from which it has been inferred that miracles may be performed by evil spirits or their agents. After some miracles that Moses wrought, it is said that “the magicians did in like manner with their enchantments.” The magicians did not perform any miracle. All they did, as the narrative of Moses expressly states, was to busy themselves in their enchantments, by which we know miracles, or extraordinary effects can be accomplished. Our Lord foretold that there should arise false Christs and false prophets, who should show great signs and wonders; but we know that they were not real miracles from

the accounts which have come down to us of the wonders which they exhibit, and which are exactly of the same kind with the tricks employed by jugglers to excite the admiration of the multitude.

We repeat it again, none but God can perform miracles. Men are merely instruments in the hand of God. The power to work miracles is not communicated to them, nor is it inherent in them; no man can perform a miracle by his own power; even Peter could no more work miracles than any other man; but it was God, or Jesus Christ: for example, when he had cured the lame man, and the people greatly wondered, he said, "Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power, or holiness, we had made this man to walk? The name of Jesus, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know."

Miracles may be vindicated and proved. Their credibility rests upon historical evidence, upon the testimony of those who were eye and ear witnesses of them. The greater part of our knowledge has no other foundation than human testimony. If it can therefore be shown that those who witnessed the miracles were in every respect competent witnesses, that they could not be deceived, that it was not in their power to deceive, and that they were in no wise intentional deceivers, the credibility of miracles is at once established. These assertions will with full force apply to the miracles wrought by Moses, by Christ, and his Apostles.

Hume's celebrated argument against miracles is founded on experience. He maintains that the proof against them is complete, being established upon the constant experience of the immutability of the order of nature. This is no proof at all; it is a mere sophism, an inference which is not contained in the premises. The premises are neither self-evident nor demonstrable, but assumed. Suppose that for four thousand years the course of nature had not been disturbed, does it follow that it never will be disturbed? How did this philosopher know what has been the course of nature in past ages? He did not exist from the beginning, and was indebted for his knowledge of what had happened before him to testimony. Now, this testimony

tells him, as it tells us, that the course of nature had been uniform, but had been subject to repeated interruptions; and how could he say, with candour and with truth, that it had never been altered?

Miracles are natural and necessary accompaniments of a new revelation. If God should be pleased to make any communication to mankind, for their benefit and his glory, there would be a necessity that he should interpose in a sensible manner; miracles were evidently necessary, because it was only by them that it could be attested.

History, it is said, abounds in wonderful facts, of both Heathen and Popish miracles. But they are not worthy of credit, and come in every respect short of the true marks of miracles. Some of the Popish miracles carry their own confutation with them, being so absurd and ridiculous, that even a child would laugh at them. The best authenticated Heathen miracles are those which Vespasian performed in Alexandria upon a blind and lame man, as related by Tacitus. But it might easily be shown that this fact falls far short of being a real miracle. I shall now conclude this chapter, by mentioning the criteria of miracles as they are set down by Horne in his "Introduction to the study of the Bible." They are six in number, viz.:

A miracle should have an important end in view worthy of its author. It must be instantaneously and publicly performed before credible witnesses.

It must be sensible and easily to be observed, so that the senses of mankind can clearly and fully judge of it.

It ought to be independent of second causes.

Not only public monuments must be kept up, but some outward actions must also be constantly performed in memory of the facts thus publicly wrought. And, finally, such monuments must be kept up, and such actions and observances instituted, at the very time when those events took place, and be afterwards continued without interruption.

These criteria of miracles apply with the greatest correctness to the miracles related in the Sacred Writings.

CHAPTER VIII.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

FROM what has been advanced in the preceding chapter on the subject of miracles, it is evident that the religion in favour of which miracles have been wrought is true. Miracles were signs of the presence of God with those who exhibited these seals, by which their commission to communicate his will was attested.

Infidels have asked, what connexion is there between truth and power? meaning that there is no connexion, or that the truth of a doctrine cannot be proved by a miracle. We ask, what connexion is there between a man's signature and the validity of the bill or bond he has subscribed? What connexion is there between the credentials of an ambassador and his right to transact the business of his sovereign?

It has been asserted by some Christian writers, that miracles alone are not sufficient to prove the truth of a doctrine; that we must take into the account the nature of the doctrine as well as the miracles.

This opinion is at variance with the Scriptures, which so often appeal to miracles as a proof of doctrines, and with the declarations of Christ. He rests his claim to be believed solely upon his miracles. "Believe me, says Christ to the Jews, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake." John xiv. 11. "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." John v. 36.

Our first argument, then, for the truth of revealed religion is founded on the miracles which were wrought to attest it. The next is derived from prophecy.

A prophecy is the annunciation of a future event which could not have been foreknown by natural means. The characteristics of a real prophecy are the following:

First, a prophecy must be definite, that is, it must mention

the time, the place, and persons, when, where, and on whom it will be accomplished. It must not be ambiguous as the Heathen oracles were. For instance, Pyrrhus, when he was going to make war with the Romans, received the answer :

*Adio te Æcida Romanos vincere posse ;
Ibis redibis numquam in bello peribis.*

“I say that thou, O son of Æcus, art able to conquer the Romans; thou shalt go, thou shalt return, thou shalt never perish in war.” Or, “I say that the Romans are able to conquer thee, O son of Æcus! thou shalt go, thou shalt never return; thou shalt perish in war.” Of the same kind was the answer of the oracle to Cræsus, when he was going to make war with the Persians. Κροισσσι ‘Αλυν διαβας μεγαν αρχην διαλυσει. “Cræsus having passed the river Halys, shall overturn a great empire.” This was a safe prediction, because it would prove true whether his own kingdom or that of the Persians would be subverted. The obscurity which attends the prophecies of Scripture, has proceeded from the wisdom of God, who designed to give such notice of future events as should excite a general expectation of them, but not to make the information so perspicuous and minute as to induce men to attempt either to hasten or to impede their fulfilment. But the obscurity is in nowise so great as to render it uncertain whether they are prophecies or happy conjectures.

In the next place, a prophecy must relate to contingent events. Events that happen from necessity may be known long before they happen. Astronomers can calculate the eclipses of the sun and moon, years before they happen.

Again, a prophecy must be of such a nature that the accomplishment of it cannot be foreseen by human sagacity. If we are acquainted with the character of an individual, we may judge and foretell how he will act and conduct himself on certain occasions, and in certain situations; but this would not be a prophecy.

Fourthly, it must not be predicted after the event has taken place. Virgil prophesied that the Roman republic should be changed into a monarchical government; but he lived in the time of Augustus, when the event had taken place.

Fifthly, it must not give occasion to the accomplishment of the prediction. Gordius, the king, made a knot, and said that he who should undo it, would conquer Asia. Alexander took his sword and cut it in two, and said that he had undone the knot. Here, the prediction gave occasion to the fulfilment.

Finally, it must be accomplished not only in part, but the whole. I proceed to lay before you some of the predictions, found in the sacred books; they are so numerous, that I can, for the sake of brevity, only mention a few of the most important. First, I call your attention to the prophecies of Moses, respecting the Jews. Moses foretells the invasion and conquest of their country by the Romans. Deut. xxviii. 49, 51. Their dreadful sufferings at the time of this conquest (Deut. xxviii. 50-52), which are confirmed by the testimony of Josephus, an eye and ear-witness to the calamities that befel the nation: he relates among other facts, one of a woman who ate the flesh of her own child; and he says, "that no other city ever suffered such things, as no generation, from the beginning of the world, so much abounded in wickedness."

Moses foretells the dispersion of the Jewish nation—which prediction we all know has been fulfilled; and the present state of the Jews exactly corresponds with it. Deut. xxviii. 64. The last circumstance I shall mention, is the prediction relative to the ten tribes, who, wherever they reside, have adopted the false religion of the heathen, among whom they sojourn, according to the prediction of Moses. Deut. xxviii. 64.

There is a prior prophecy concerning Ishmael, which is worthy of our notice. Gen. xvi. 12. The prediction, which at first view seems to relate to himself alone, and was to a certain extent applicable to him, is understood to refer ultimately to his descendants. These are the Arabians, whose character and history exactly correspond with it. The greater part of them have been from time immemorial, and still are, wild men, ranging the deserts, and living upon the spoils which they gather from solitary travellers, from caravans, and from the adjacent countries into which they make frequent incursions. Their hand is against every man, and every man's hand has been against them. Throughout all past ages, they

have maintained their independence, and dwelt "in the presence of their brethren."

Secondly, the prophecies which relate to the neighbouring nations of the Jews, the Egyptians, the Babylonians, and Tyre. Read the following passages—in regard to Egypt, Ezekiel xxix. 14, 15; and Babylon, Isaiah xlv. 1; Jer. l. 38—li. 39—57; and Tyre, Ezekiel xxvi. 14; and compare them with the present state of those cities and countries.

Thirdly, the predictions concerning the Messiah. The prophets foretell the family from which he should spring; the place of his birth; the time of his appearance; his supernatural endowments; the manner of his life; the nature of his doctrine; his miracles; his rejection by his countrymen; his sufferings; his death; his resurrection; his ascension; the establishment of his religion, and its progress in the world. One prophet writes as if he had been a spectator of his sufferings. Isa. liii. All the prophets, indeed, bore witness to him; and as most of their predictions have been punctually fulfilled, we believe that those which remain will also be accomplished.

And lastly, we notice the prophecies of the New Testament; the prophecy which relates to the fall and destruction of Jerusalem, recorded, Matthew xxiv., Mark xiii. 14, and Luke xxi. 20, to the man of sin and the son of perdition, 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4; and to the predictions in the Book of Revelation, relative to the antichristian power, and other subjects. A considerable part of the revelation has been fulfilled; other parts are yet to be fulfilled, and hence we expect that every particular part will be accomplished in its order and season.

This is the second argument for the truth of our religion. The fulfilment of prophecy attests the commission of the prophet, proves him to be a messenger from God, stamps the character of truth upon his instructions, and lays us under an obligation to receive whatever he delivers to us in the name of God.

CHAPTER IX.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE third argument for the truth of our religion is founded on its success. Jesus Christ, the founder of the Christian religion, was a person, in the estimation of the world, of mean birth in respect of worldly wealth, honour, and power. He lived in obscurity until he was thirty years old. When he appeared as a public teacher, he had but few disciples, and these generally of the lower class of people. The twelve apostles, whom he chose to be witnesses of his ministry, and the publishers of his doctrine, were fishermen and publicans, without human learning, wealth, power, or friends to give them influence. The doctrines which he and his apostles after him taught, were opposed to all the religions of the Gentile world, and also to the Jewish religion, as it was then generally corrupted. They were opposed also to the passions, the prejudices, the education, and the worldly interests of the men to whom they were addressed. Christ was hated by the Jews, and was finally apprehended by them and put to an ignominious death, as a notorious malefactor. After his death, the apostles, under all these disadvantages, went forth at his command, to establish the Christian religion. They met with the most determined opposition both by the Jews, and by the powerful Roman empire. They were threatened, fined, imprisoned, tortured in almost every way that malice could invent, and many of them were put to death. Under all these difficulties and discouraging circumstances, the Christian religion surmounted every obstacle. It triumphed over the passions, the prejudices, the education, and the worldly interests of men. It triumphed over the arms and the persecutions of the Roman empire. So that, in three centuries from the death of its founder, Christianity became the established religion of the empire, which had exerted all its power to crush it. To what must we attribute this wonderful success, but to the power of God, that accompanied the preaching of the apostles, by the in-

fluence of his spirit, with signs and wonders. Nothing short of the power of God could under such circumstances have succeeded in the establishment of Christianity; and this exertion of divine power argues that God approved of it, and that therefore it is of divine original.

This wonderful success is corroborated by the testimony of both heathen and Christian writers, who lived and wrote in the primitive ages of the church; by Tacitus and Pliny, as heathen, and Justin Martyr and Tertullian, as Christian writers. The same power that extended to the establishment and spread of the Christian religion, is manifested in its continuance and progress in the world; notwithstanding the subtle, powerful, persevering, and determined attempts which its enemies on earth, aided by the powers of darkness, have made to destroy it. It has withstood repeated and long-continued shocks of bloody persecutions. It has passed through the more dangerous trial of courtly favour, and the formal homage of the great. It has had to contend with superstition, enthusiasm, and fanaticism. It has often been exposed to prejudice and reproach by the defection of its friends, and has been assailed by infidelity, prepared and strengthened for the combat by human science; but it has stood all these mighty efforts, and it still stands, and is gaining ground, till it shall fill the whole earth with its benign influence. Surely, the Christian religion, thus supported by an Almighty power, must be divine.

It has been objected to this argument, that mere success is not a decisive proof of the truth of the Christian religion; that the Mahometan religion arose from as small beginnings, and has become as extensive, as the Christian religion. In answer to this objection, we would reply:—The Mahometan religion was propagated by the force of arms; the Christian, by the preaching of Christ crucified, and in opposition to arms. The Mahometan religion was gratifying to the passions and corruptions of human nature; it allowed of many impurities in this life, and promised a paradise of sensual pleasure in the next. The Christian, on the contrary, made no compromise with the corrupt propensities of human nature; but forbade every sin,

and inculcated holiness. Mahomet was at the head of an army; self-interest no doubt influenced many to join him. But the Christian religion, unsupported and persecuted by the civil powers, could not be embraced but at the imminent hazard of property and life. The two cases were entirely different. The one was established by the power of man, the other by the power of God.

I have considered the external evidences of revealed religion, miracles, and prophecy, and to these have added the argument derived from the success of the Gospel. I proceed to give a short view of the internal evidences, which arise from a survey of its contents. The Scriptures teach us the knowledge and worship of the one true and living God, in opposition to the plurality of idol gods worshipped by the heathens; it displays his character and divine perfections in a most glorious light; it informs us that the world is not eternal, and came not into existence by mere chance; but that it was created by Almighty power, and that it is upheld and governed by that same power which brought all things into being; it informs us that his providence extends to all things in heaven and on earth, and consequently that the world is not governed by blind fate, as many of the heathen philosophers taught; it gives us a true account of the origin of evil,—of both moral and physical evil,—that God in the beginning created man holy and upright, but that, in consequence of the abuse of his free will and disobedience, he forfeited his original glory and innocence, and has exposed himself to the displeasure of his Creator—to death and misery; it points to the remedy by which he can be reclaimed, namely, to the redemption purchased by the Son of God, or to that vicarious atonement he made for human guilt and misery, by satisfying divine justice and fulfilling all the demands of the law; it contains a full and complete code of moral duties—the duties we owe to God and man, and confirms them by the most powerful motives; and finally, it puts the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and a future state of retribution, beyond all possibility of doubt.

The system of doctrines and moral precepts, which are delivered in the Scriptures, is so excellent and so perfectly holy, that the persons who published them to the world must have derived them from a purer and more exalted source than their own meditations. The majesty of the style in which the Scriptures, particularly some parts of them, were written, affords another argument in favour of their divine original. In the Book of Job, in the Psalms, in Isaiah, and some of the other prophets, and in the Revelation, we find a majesty of style and sentiment far surpassing anything contained in the writings of Homer or Virgil; authors justly celebrated and admired in all ages for their sublimity. The unequalled majesty of the style of the Scriptures, superior to that of any other writings, affords an argument that the authors were inspired with a spirit more than human, and that they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The harmony of all parts of the Revelation, is another proof in favour of its divinity. Though the Scriptures were written by different men, in different languages and countries, and at different times far distant from each other, there is a perfect harmony prevailing in all their parts, historical, doctrinal, practical, and prophetic. This harmony strongly indicates that every part of the Scriptures was dictated by the same unerring and divine spirit.

The preservation of the Scriptures is another argument in favour of their truth and divine origin. Various and repeated attempts have been made to destroy them; but still they were preserved and handed down to us. This wonderful preservation can be consistently accounted for in no other way than by the peculiar care of divine providence, which shows his approbation of this book, and that therefore he is its author.

Lastly, we may deduce an argument for our religion from its effects. It has changed the state of those nations which have embraced it, and introduced a degree of knowledge, of morality, of civilization, and of domestic happiness, of which there was no experience before its appearance. It has harmonized the general manners, and produced many individual

examples of virtue, to which no other religion can present a parallel. It has reclaimed the nations from idolatry, and raised peasants to a rank in the moral scale far above any of the most celebrated heathen philosophers. Can such a religion be an imposture?

The internal evidences of Revelation, independent of the external proof arising from miracles and prophecy, present themselves to every unprejudiced mind and impartial inquirer as arguments, satisfactory, that it is not a human invention, but that it is divine, and has God for its author.

CHAPTER X.

OBJECTIONS AGAINST REVELATION AND ITS RECORDS CONSIDERED.

ALTHOUGH the evidences with which revelation is accompanied are sufficient to satisfy a candid mind, yet there have been, in ancient and modern times, disputers, by whom the evidences of Christianity have been opposed, and its claims rejected.

In this chapter I shall consider some of the objections which have been advanced against divine revelation and its records.

The first objection proceeds upon the ground that it is unnecessary, because reason is a sufficient guide in religion, and reflects upon the wisdom of God in the creation of man, as if he had not at first duly fitted him for the end of his being, and therefore found it expedient afterwards to supply the defect. This objection we answered in a former chapter, when we showed the inadequacy of reason in matters of religion. It appeared that unassisted reason has never attained to the knowledge of the true God, or been able to construct a perfect rule of duty, and establish beyond doubt the doctrine of a future state.

Reason, when first conferred, was fully adequate to all the purposes which it was intended to serve; but since the fall, the

understanding has been darkened, and the heart corrupted, so that it is now led astray by the imagination and the passions, adopts false principles, and draws erroneous conclusions.

Although reason had succeeded in discovering all the articles of natural religion, it would not be a competent guide, because it could give us no information respecting the means of recovering our innocence, and regaining the favour of our Maker, any more than the knowledge of all that is necessary to us in health would direct us to the remedies which are wanted in disease and sickness. Hence, because we are depraved and corrupted, sinful and guilty, it was expedient that Infinite Wisdom should interfere in our behalf, and devise the plan by which we might be restored to our original state.

The second objection against the revelation of the Scriptures is: "Christianity is known only to a small portion of mankind; if a divine revelation was necessary, why has it not been granted to all?"

The objection applies to the Jewish, as well as to the Christian revelation. Why, it may be asked, did God select the Jewish nation to be his peculiar people; and why did he confer on them peculiar privileges; while the rest of the human race were left to wander in the mazes of ignorance and sin? The objection applies to nations in general, and individuals in particular. Here is a nation, without any peculiar merit, which enjoys all the advantages of a fine climate, and a fertile soil, and all the blessings of civilization; while there are many others, in a half-barbarous state, inhabiting barren regions, and struggling with inclement seasons. Again, here are a few individuals adorned with genius and taste, so as to seem to be beings of a superior order, when compared with multitudes who rank low in the scale of intellect, and are as children in comparison with them. Unless, on the ground of these differences, we are prepared to deny a Providence which rules over all, I do not see that we can deny a revelation, because it was once confined to a single people, and is still known only to a portion of mankind. To reason from the goodness of God, that it will be dispensed in equal shares to all men, is false in experience, and must be

so in theory; that is, to infer *à priori*, that if a revelation were made it would be communicated to all nations, is contrary to the analogy of Providence, which gives to one and withholds from another. What right have men to prescribe to the Almighty the mode of his providence? or have they a right to demand that a free gift shall be alike imparted to all? May not God do as he pleases with his own? The revelation of the Scriptures supposes every individual to be guilty in the sight of God, and consequently to have forfeited any title to his favour. Why, then, shall we complain that a particular blessing has been withheld from some, while it has been bestowed upon others? Our duty is to look to the evidence of divine revelation, and not to the accidental circumstances of its partial or universal propagation, and, if we find the evidence sufficient by which it is sustained, we are bound to embrace the religion, whether its benefits have been extended to few or many.

In the third place, it is objected against revelation that it contains mysteries and doctrines contrary to reason. Natural religion abounds in mysteries, as well as revealed. What is a more mysterious subject than God, a being without beginning, infinite, but not extended, comprehending all things at a glance, upholding all things without perplexity, and infallibly accomplishing all his purposes, yet leaving his creatures in possession of liberty? Are we not a mystery to ourselves? Is not every thing around us replete with mysteries? Is there, in fact, any thing which man thoroughly knows? A grain of sand or drop of water puzzles him. Why, then, does he expect that religion should be free from mysteries? The objection against revelation, on account of its mysteries, would be well founded, if it could be shown that its doctrines are contrary to reason. But it is one thing to assert, and another to prove. It is often said that the doctrine of the Trinity is contrary to reason, for how can the same Being be one and three? This indeed would be true, if we affirmed that he is one and three in the same sense; but this is not our doctrine. We say, that he is one, in one sense, and three in another; one in essence, and three in personal distinctions.

In the fourth place, infidels object to the scheme of redemption, as implying what is incredible and impossible — they exclaim against the incarnation of our Saviour as absurd and impious. We reply; that the doctrine of revelation teaches us that God became man by uniting himself to the human nature in a mysterious manner; but without any confusion or mixture of the natures, which remained perfectly distinct; so that when it speaks of the Son of God as having been born, and as having suffered and died, it refers exclusively to the assumed human nature, of which alone such things are predicable; although it ascribes them to the person to whom that nature belongs.

And who will presume to say that this union of the divine and human nature was impossible? Who can tell us what God can, and cannot do? In the composition of man, God has conjoined two substances, which have no common properties, and yet, as experience teaches us, operate together, and upon each other. God upholds his creatures by his power, assists and excites them to act; “in him we live, and move, and have our being.” Is God limited in his operations? Is it impossible for him to form a more intimate alliance with his creatures? Would it be unworthy of him, and contrary to the nature of things, to select a human being as the instrument of his agency, for some great purpose, and to connect that being with himself by a peculiar and mysterious relation? This is the doctrine of the incarnation.

Again, infidels object to the substitution of Christ, and say that it is inconsistent with justice, that one person should suffer for another—that the innocent should bear the punishment of the guilty? In answer to this objection, we remark; that the idea of vicarious suffering has prevailed in all ages and nations. Jews and Gentiles have believed that the Deity might be appeased, not only by the sufferings of the guilty themselves, but by the death of animals offered in their room; and hence sacrifices were an essential part of their religion. The universal agreement of men, on this subject, is a proof that they did not consider it incompatible with justice, that the penalty to which

one individual was subject, should be inflicted on another. The idea is admitted still, in all cases of suretyship, when one person is called to make good the engagements which another has failed to fulfil. It may be said, that in such cases there can be no injustice, because the surety, when he became responsible for another, was aware of the consequences.

It is exactly on this ground that we vindicate the doctrine of atonement. It would be contrary to justice that the innocent should suffer for the guilty, if the sufferer were compelled; if he were not master of his own life, and had no right to dispose of it; or if society would be injured by his death, and if the punishment would be complete and final loss to himself. But none of these things are applicable to the present case. First, Jesus Christ was a willing victim. Secondly, he was lord of his own life—he had power to lay it down, and power to take it again. Thirdly, so far was his death from being injurious to society, that the greatest benefit has resulted to mankind from it, as the price of their eternal redemption. Lastly, his sufferings have terminated in unspeakable advantage to himself. After he had completed the work of redemption, he is crowned with majesty and glory, and reigns at the right hand of his Father, over heaven and earth.

Once more, it is objected that the death of the Son of God, for the salvation of the world, in his assumed nature, is unworthy of the wisdom of God, and incredible that such great preparations should have been made for the sake of a race of insignificant beings, as men are; that the destruction of them, and the earth which they inhabit, would not have caused a perceptible blank in the wide regions of creation. To reason thus; to reason from the greatness of God, and the littleness of man, would lead to conclusions which we know to be false. We might ask, why does he take any concern in creation? Why does he bestow attentions on particular parts of it, for example, upon men—as we learn from experience that he does, in the dispensations of his providence? Why does he care for still more contemptible creatures, insects and animalcules, whom he brings into existence by his power, and sustains by his

bounty. The proper question, therefore, in the present case, is, not what in our apprehension it becomes God to do, but what he has actually done. We ought to consider the object he had in view, which was, to deliver millions of human beings from perdition, and to raise them to a state of eternal happiness. Was this an insignificant object? And are we certain that this was the only design? Is there no reason to think that it is a part of a great moral scheme, and that its effects extend to the whole intelligent creation? Was it not intended to be a manifestation of the character and perfections of the Deity, by which he would be exalted in the eyes of all orders of rational beings; the authority of his law would be more solemnly established; the obedient would be confirmed in their allegiance, and their felicity would be augmented? Taken in this connexion, our little world, and insignificant race, acquire an importance, which, viewed in themselves, they did not possess. Man has been the object of this wonderful dispensation, not for his sake only, but for the good of the whole family, dispersed among the countless worlds which roll in the immensity of space; and the earth is the chosen theatre for the display of the glories of the Godhead.

In the fifth place, infidels object to many of the facts related in the Scriptures, as absurd and impossible. For instance, the account of the temptation of our first parents. They say, who can believe that the agent was a serpent, and that the sin consisted in eating an apple? The agent was indeed a serpent, but not the dumb irrational reptile alone; but it was merely the instrument of a malignant being, who was permitted to utter articulate sounds through its mouth, for the trial of the primitive pair. The sin of eating of the forbidden fruit may be trifling in itself, but it assumes another character, when we consider that it proceeded from resistance to lawful authority.

The story of Balaam's ass has been held up to ridicule, but unjustly. We do not suppose that the animal had the power of speech, and understood the sounds which it uttered, but merely that it was enabled to express a few words for a particular purpose; and all objections should be silenced by the statement, that "The Lord opened its mouth."

The history of the deluge has been assailed by many objections. We shall only mention one, namely, that the ark could not contain the various kinds of animals; but it has been proved, by accurate calculation, to have afforded ample space for them, and for food to sustain them, during the time of their confinement. The dimensions of the ark were three hundred cubits in length, fifty in breadth, and thirty in height; and it consisted of three stories or floors. Reckoning the cubit at eighteen inches, Dr. Hales has proved that the ark was sufficient to contain eight persons, and about two hundred, or two hundred and fifty pair of four-footed animals; a number to which, according to Buffon, all the various distinct species may be reduced, together with all the subsistence necessary for a twelve-month. To these are to be added all the fowls of the air, and such reptiles and insects as cannot live under water.

The event recorded in Joshua, where the sun and moon are said to have stood still, has been pronounced to be impossible, according to the constitution of nature; but you will observe that the history speaks according to the ideas of the age, and was intended to record simply the appearance to the eye, to which the language of men, whether philosophers or peasants, is still conformed, in common conversation. Whether the effect was produced by a supernatural refraction, or whether the motion of the earth around its axis was suspended, we do not possess the means of determining; in either case, there was a miracle, and both were alike easy to Omnipotence.

I shall take notice, in the last place, of the fate of Jonah, who was three days in the belly or stomach of a whale, or rather a great fish, for the word is general, and does not inform us of the species. The preservation of Jonah, we say, was a miracle, and no person, who believes that God is omnipotent, can doubt that he could have preserved Jonah in his perilous situation.

In the sixth place, infidels object, that the Scriptures make God the author of sin, by representing Him as tempting men—hardening their hearts, and putting it into their minds to do evil; but such expressions, when viewed in their connexion,

can only mean, that God did not interpose to change the dispositions of the persons referred to ; that he left them to themselves ; and that the circumstances in which they were placed had a tendency to elicit their depravity, and to confirm their criminal purposes.

The command of God to offer up Isaac, has been said to be cruel and inhuman, and therefore unworthy a just and beneficent Being. We may say, that God had no design to accept such a sacrifice, but only to make trial of Abraham's faith, and furnish a noble example of obedience to succeeding generations. But if Isaac had been slain, would any injustice have been done ? His life was forfeited by sin, like that of other men, and might be taken from him in this way, as well as by disease. It would have been painful to his father to be the agent, but the supreme Governor, who cannot do wrong, has a right to prescribe any service to his subjects which he thinks fit.

The extermination of the nations of Canaan, it is alleged by other objecters, could not have proceeded from God, for it was unjust and unmerciful. In reply, we say, that these nations were deserving of punishment on account of their wickedness ; that had God destroyed them by an earthquake, no one would have thought it unjust ; and should it be so when rooted out by the sword of the Israelites ? They having witnessed the sufferings of the Canaanites, and knowing the cause of them, would be more effectually restrained from imitating their abominable practices. The command to spoil the Egyptians is justified on these grounds ; that the Sovereign Proprietor has a right to transfer the property of one person to another ; and that in this case it was a just retribution, because the Israelites had long laboured for the good of the Egyptians, but had been cruelly oppressed and defrauded of their due. But it is said that they borrowed, which implies a promise of return ; but in the original the word is to *ask* — they were commanded to ask jewels of gold, and silver, and raiment from their neighbours ; and to account for their success, it is stated, that "The Lord gave the people favour in the eyes of the Egyptians."

In the last place, the supposed contradictions in the Scrip-

tures furnish a ground of objection, as coming from God. These discrepancies do not affect the general truth of our religion. In some cases the contradiction is only apparent, and is easily removed by an explanation of the passages. It is said of God, that he will not lie nor repent, and it is affirmed that he repented having set Saul over Israel. 1 Sam. xv. 11, 29. There is no real opposition in these two statements. God does not repent, in the sense of changing his counsels; but he repents in the sense of changing his dispensations. The apostle James says, that God tempts no man; James i. 13; but Moses says, God did tempt Abraham. James means, by tempting, soliciting to sin; while Moses means, making trial of faith and obedience.

Some contradictions it is impossible to reconcile; but they may be accounted for by false reading. For example, we read that Ahaziah was forty and two years old when he began to reign, although, in the preceding chapter, we are told that his father died at the age of forty; and besides, he was his youngest son. This was impossible. The true reading we believe to be, twenty-two, as we find in another book. 2 Chron. xxii. 2; 2 Kings viii. 26. The varying accounts of the age of Jehoiachim, at the beginning of his reign, is explained in the same way, who is said, in Kings, to have been eighteen, and, in Chronicles, to have been eight. 2 Kings xxiv. 8.; Chron. xxxvi. 9. From the same cause, Solomon is represented, in one place, as having forty thousand stalls for horses, and, in another place, as having only four thousand.

It is not surprising, that in a book so ancient as the Old Testament, and which has been so often translated, some mistakes should have been committed; and, without a miracle, they could not have been prevented. Historical and chronological difficulties may, in many cases, be easily removed, by paying attention to different dates, and to the order of time.

By referring to different dates, we account for the difference in the number of years. For instance: of Abraham's seed it is said, that they should be four hundred years strangers in a land which was not theirs; and in another, that they were

delivered from Egypt at the expiration of four hundred and thirty years. Gen. xv. 13; Exod. xii. 40. The date of the first is from the birth of Isaac; and, in the second, from the call of the patriarch. Another instance of seeming contradiction, arising from a disregard of the order of time, you find in John xii. 1, 3; Matt. xxvi. 2, 7. John says, that Christ was anointed at Bethany six days before the Passover; and Matthew does not speak of it till two days of the feast. It was then that Judas offered to betray his master; and, in relating his design, Matthew recollected the event which compelled him to execute it: the rebuke which he received from Christ some days before, when he complained of the waste of the ointment.

The two different genealogies given by Matthew and Luke, may be accounted for, by supposing that Matthew gives his descent from David in the line of Joseph, his reputed father; and Luke, his descent in the line of Mary, his mother. Matt. i.; Luke iii. 23 *et seq.* The different accounts of the superscription on the cross may be reconciled by the circumstance that it was written in different languages, wherein one of the evangelists has given it from the Hebrew, another from the Greek, and another from the Latin. Matt. xvii. 37; John xix. 19; Luke xxiii. 38. In like manner, with regard to the exclamation of the centurion, who said, according to Matthew, "Truly this was the Son of God;" but, according to Luke, "certainly this was a righteous man;" Matt. xxvii. 54, Luke xxiii. 47, both accounts may be true, although each of the evangelists has thought proper to give only one of them.

The preceding is merely a specimen of the modes of reconciling different passages. The subject is so extensive, that you must be referred to authors who have treated it at length. Vide Horne's Introduction to the Study of the Holy Scriptures, Vol. I.

CHAPTER XI.

INSPIRATION OF THE SACRED WRITERS.

IN the preceding chapters, I have endeavoured to prove that the Scriptures were written by the persons to whom they are ascribed, and that their contents are worthy of credit. But it is not enough that you are satisfied that they are genuine and authentic, but it is necessary you should be convinced of their divine authority; or that the sacred writers were inspired. That the Scriptures were actually dictated by inspiration, may be inferred both from the reasonableness and necessity of the thing. It is reasonable that the sentiments and doctrines developed in the Scriptures, should be suggested to the minds of the writers by the Supreme Being himself. They relate principally to matters concerning which the communicating of information to men is worthy of God. The necessity of revelation has been evinced in a former chapter; and the same reasoning establishes the necessity of inspiration. Besides this, the subjects of Scripture render inspiration necessary. Some facts could not possibly have been known, had not God revealed them; many things are recorded as future, which God alone could foreknow and foretell; others again are far above human capacity, and never could have been discovered by men. The authoritative language of Scripture, too, argues the necessity of inspiration, admitting the veracity of the writers. They propose things, not as matters of consideration, but for adoption. They do not give us the alternative of receiving or rejecting; they do not present us with their own thoughts; but exclaim, *Thus saith the Lord*; and on that ground demand our assent.

In proving the inspiration of Scripture, we appeal to their own testimony. As it regards the Old Testament, I shall quote the words of Paul, in the Second Epistle to Timothy: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in

righteousness." It has been affirmed, that the verse should be rendered thus: "every writing, divinely inspired, is profitable;" and it is thus converted into a general proposition, which does not vouch for any particular book, and leaves the question undecided, what books are inspired. This translation has a tendency to weaken and overthrow the authority of the Jewish canon. That it is a mistranslation may easily be seen on consulting the original: Πασα γραφη θεοπνευστος και ωφελιμος. The conjunction και, which connects θεοπνευστος and ωφελιμος, clearly shows that both adjectives belong to the predicate of the proposition, and that πασα γραφη alone is the subject. Had Paul meant to express the idea which these critics attach to the words, he would have left out the conjunction, or perhaps have substituted the verb of existence, εστι, as a copulative: πασα γραφη θεοπνευστος ωφελιμος, or πασα γραφη θεοπνευστος εστιν ωφελιμος. This, then, is the proper translation: "every writing is divinely inspired, and is profitable;" that is, every one of the writings referred to in the preceding verse, under the designation of the Holy Scriptures; and thus he asserts the inspiration of all the books contained in the Old Testament. There are many other passages, in which the inspiration of the Old Testament is asserted or implied. Moses affirms that he wrote part, at least, of the Pentateuch by the command of God. Deut. xxxi. 19, 22. David tells us that the spirit of the Lord spake by him, and his word was on his tongue. 2 Sam. xxiii. 2. And all the prophets delivered their messages in the name of Jehovah. Our Lord appealed to them as containing the words of eternal life, and gave his sanction to them all, as arranged by the Jews, in the three divisions of the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. With respect to the books of the New Testament, it is evident that the writers were not left to their own unassisted faculties, from the promise of our Saviour, that the Father would send the Spirit in his name, "who should teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them." John xiv. 26; xvi. 13. He likewise admonished them, when they were brought before magistrates and councils for his sake, to "take no thought what they should

say, because it would be given them in that hour what they should speak, that is, proper words and sentiments would be suggested to them." Matt. x. 19.

Hence I think we may justly infer that they enjoyed the same supernatural assistance in composing their narrations and epistles; in which it was at least equally necessary, as these were to be the rule of faith and practice to the church in all ages. Accordingly, they did claim inspiration by many express declarations. Paul tells us, in the name of his brethren, that they had received the Spirit of God that they might know the things which were freely given them of God; "which things also we speak not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." 1 Cor. ii. 13. In speaking of himself he affirms, that he had "the mind of Christ;" 1 Cor. ii. 16; that the things which he wrote were "the commandments of the Lord;" 1 Cor. xiv. 37; that the Gospel which he preached he had received "by the revelation of Jesus Christ;" Gal. i. 12; and that whosoever despised the things which he and his brethren taught, despised not man but God, who had given to them the Holy Ghost. 1 Thess. iv. 8. John, including all the apostles, says, "we are of God, he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us." 1 John iv. 6. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Some of the preceding passages refer directly to their writings, and in them all it is assumed that the apostles were supernaturally assisted in communicating the Gospel to mankind; and consequently in committing it to writing as well as in preaching it.

Although it has been generally acknowledged that there is a specific difference between the Sacred books and human compositions, yet there has been a diversity of opinions as to the extent of their inspiration. Some have had the boldness to deny it altogether; and some have circumscribed it within very narrow limits; others maintain that it was only occasional. Once more, it has been affirmed, "that the whole scheme of the Gospel was supernaturally revealed to the Apostles, was

faithfully retained in their memories, and is expounded in their writings by the use of their natural faculties."

Many learned men have held the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, or that every part of them is inspired, and was immediately communicated to the minds of the writers. As some parts relate to common things, to things which might have been known from other sources; to others, it seemed absurd to introduce a revelation where the bodily senses and natural reason were fully adequate to the purpose. But this is not the true idea of plenary inspiration. It extends to the whole Scriptures, but admits of degrees suited to the nature of the subject, which the writers were employed to record, and did not supersede the use of their natural faculties. The whole was not a revelation in the strict acceptation of the term; but the whole was committed to writing by the direction and assistance of the spirit: by the influence of the spirit upon the understandings, imaginations, memories, and other mental powers of the sacred writers, they were qualified to communicate to the world the knowledge of the will of God. No man who believes that God is the former of our souls, and the master of our faculties, will deny the possibility of such an influence.

The Jews make mention of three degrees of inspiration of the Old Testament. The first and the highest they attribute to Moses, with whom "God spake mouth to mouth, and not in dark similitudes. The second they call the gift of prophecy. The last and lowest is the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, from which proceeded those books called the holy writings; but this division is altogether fanciful and arbitrary.

As all Christian authors agree that inspiration admits of different degrees, they usually make mention of the following, namely, superintendence, elevation, and suggestion. Superintendence signifies the care exercised over those who related things which they knew by ordinary means, and by which they were preserved from the possibility of error. Elevation prevailed where the faculties were raised to an extraordinary degree, so that the composition, upon the whole, had more of the true sublime, or pathetic, than natural genius could have given;

and suggestion, in which the use of the faculties is superseded, and God does, as it were, speak directly to the mind, making such discoveries to it as could not otherwise have been obtained, and dictating the very words in which such discoveries are to be communicated to others.

But although this distinction is generally adopted, it is liable to material objections :

First, There are many things which the writers might have known, and probably did know, by ordinary means, where a supernatural influence was unnecessary to enlighten and invigorate their minds, but only necessary that they should be preserved from error. Moses could tell without supernatural aid that on such a night the Israelites marched out of Egypt, and at such a place they murmured against God; and Solomon could remark, that "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger."

It is with respect to such passages alone, that the notion of superintendence should be admitted—such passages as did not exceed the natural ability of the writer to compose. Some theologians are of opinion that it ought to be entirely laid aside, as insufficient to express even the lowest degree of inspiration; that the writers were not merely superintended in the passages quoted above, that they might commit no error, but were likewise moved or exerted by the Holy Ghost to record particular events, and set down particular observations. Superintendence is, then, no peculiar kind of inspiration; but the care exercised by Providence over all the sacred writers, in whatever degree or manner inspired, to secure a faithful relation of the histories, doctrines, prophecies, and precepts, which they were employed to communicate to mankind.

Secondly, There are other passages of Scripture, in composing which, the minds of the writers must have been supernaturally endowed with more than ordinary vigour. For example: the Evangelists could not have written the history of Christ, if they had not enjoyed miraculous aid during the time they published their histories. The Gospel of Matthew having been published at least eight years, and that of John

between 60 and 70, posterior to the Ascension, they no doubt had forgotten some of his discourses and miracles, recollected others indistinctly, and if left to themselves, would have been in danger of producing an unfair and inaccurate account, by omissions and additions, or by confounding one thing with another; especially so, when we consider that they were illiterate men, whose intellectual faculties had never been exercised, and who were not in the habit of distinguishing and classifying, and could not have made a judicious selection; or, as persons unskilled in the art of composition, have been able to express themselves in such terms as should insure a faithful representation of doctrines and facts, and with such dignity as the nature of the subject required. A divine influence, therefore, was necessary to invigorate their judgments and memories, that they might be enabled to relate the discourses and miracles of their Master with fidelity, and in a manner best suited to impress the readers of their histories.

Again: There are several passages of Scripture in which there is such an elevation of thought and style, as clearly shows the faculties of the writers to have been raised above their ordinary state; read some of the prophetic and devotional books of the Old Testament, and many other passages, and you will find the purest and most sublime lessons delivered on the subject of God and religion by the natives of a country unacquainted with the philosophy, the literature, and the arts of the more polished nations of antiquity. Must not all this have been the effect of a supernatural influence on the minds of the writers?

Thirdly, It is manifest that as many things could not have been known by natural means, or the knowledge of them attained by a simple elevation of the faculties; they must have been directly revealed to the writers; for instance, when they were empowered to reveal heavenly mysteries, which "eye had not seen, and ear had not heard," or were sent to deliver particular messages from God to his people; or were employed to predict future events.

This kind of inspiration has been called the inspiration of

suggestion; but this term seems to be of too limited signification to denote the various modes in which the prophets and apostles were made acquainted with supernatural truths; in strict propriety of speech, it should be called *revelation*, as more expressive of all the ways in which God communicated new ideas to the minds of his servants. He revealed himself to them not only by suggestion, but by dreams, visions, voices, and the ministry of angels. Vide Heb. i.

Revelation is a word, too, chosen by the Holy Ghost himself, to signify the discovery of truths formerly unknown to the Apostles. The last book of the New Testament, which is a collection of prophecies, is called the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Paul says that he received his Gospel by revelation; that by "revelation the mystery was made known to him, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it was then revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the spirit. Rev. i. 1; Gal. i. 12; Eph. iii. 3, 5; 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

From what has been advanced in the preceding part of this chapter, you may perceive in what sense the Scriptures, taken as a whole, may be denominated the Word of God; we say they are the Word of God, because all the parts of which they consist, have been written by persons moved, directed, and assisted by his Holy Spirit, and not that all the sentiments contained in them are just, and all the examples worthy of imitation; for not only wicked men and wicked spirits are often introduced as speaking, but even the saints of whom mention is made were not perfect and infallible; their opinions and conduct must not instantly be presumed to be right, unless it appear that they were under the influence of the Spirit of God, or their examples be worthy of imitation.

We ought to consider all the doctrines and precepts, all the promises and threatenings of the Word of God, delivered by God himself, or by others in his name, as true, righteous, and faithful; and to believe that the events which have happened, and the words and actions which are represented to have been spoken and done, did so happen, and were so spoken and done.

But whether the conduct related be wise or foolish, moral or immoral, we must determine by the judgment pronounced in the Scriptures themselves in particular cases, or by applying those principles and general rules which are laid down in them to regulate our decisions.

Whether inspiration is to be understood as extending to the language, as well as the sentiments, is a question which has engaged a considerable share of attention. In answering this question, it is necessary to distinguish one part of Scripture from another. In those parts which are delivered in the name of God, which are commands, messages, and communications from him, or when they announced heavenly mysteries and new doctrines, and when they delivered predictions which they did not understand (that they did not always understand their own prophecies is obvious from the words of Peter, 1 Peter i. 12); in all such cases, we cannot suppose that the writers were left to choose their own words, but are necessarily led to conceive them to have adhered with equal strictness to the words as to the thoughts.

Thus far, I think, it cannot be denied that inspiration extended to the words. With regard to other parts of Scripture, consisting of histories, moral reflections, and devotional pieces, we would not contend for the inspiration of the language in the same sense. It is reasonable to believe that the writers were permitted to exercise their own faculties to a certain extent, and to express themselves in their natural manner; but at the same time we cannot suppose that, when they were most at liberty, they were in no degree directed by a secret influence in the selection of words and phrases. Even in relating what they knew, what they had seen and heard from the testimony of others, we believe that the sacred writers were assisted, although we should concede only, that occasionally a more proper word or expression was suggested to them, than would have occurred to themselves; and hence we may conclude that the style was not strictly their own, but was a style corrected and improved, and different from what they would have spontaneously used. The objection against

the inspiration of the language, founded on the diversity of style observable in the sacred writers, falls to the ground, if upon the whole they were permitted to express themselves in their natural way. If a diversity be observed even in prophecy and revelation, it is highly probable that God accommodated himself in his communications to the character and genius of the persons employed; and surely no man in his senses will maintain, that there was only one style in which he could communicate his will.

To conclude, I would observe that God manifested himself to the inspired writers of the Holy Scriptures in various ways. Sometimes he revealed himself by secret suggestion, or by infusing knowledge into the mind without the intervention of means. To this mode of communication David refers, 2 Sam. xxxiii. 2; and Peter, 1 Pet. i. 11. In this manner were the apostles endowed with the knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel; and Paul received the doctrine which he preached, not from men, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Gal. i. 12. Sometimes the will of God was made known by an audible voice. This voice spoke to our first parents, to Abraham, to Samuel, and on many occasions to Moses. Numbers vii. 89.

Again, at other times it was made known by visions or representations made to the senses or imagination. Isa. vi.; Ezek. i.; Dan. viii. In some instances, God revealed himself by dreams. We have an instance in Jacob's dream at Bethel; and in that of Paul; to whom there appeared a man of Macedonia, saying, "come over and help us." Acts xvi. 9. In some cases, the design of the dreams was easily to be understood; in others, an explanation was necessary. On a few occasions the dream was sent to one person, and another was employed to interpret it. You will recollect the history of Pharaoh and Joseph, and of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel. Lastly, communications were made by the ministry of angels, as by Gabriel to Daniel, and by the same messenger to the Blessed Virgin.

CHAPTER XII.

STATE OF THE SACRED TEXT.

IN the preceding chapters we considered the evidences of divine revelation, and the authority of the Holy Scriptures in which it is contained. As every one must wish to be satisfied that the sacred records are a faithful representation of the original documents, and have been handed down to us unaltered and uncorrupted, I shall call your attention to the state of these records, as they have come into our hands.

We do not possess the original copies of the sacred writings; they have long since disappeared. There is some reason to think that the original copy of the law of Moses existed in the days of Josiah, 2 Kings xxii. 8; and from a passage in Tertullian, it has been inferred that towards the close of the second century, the books of the New Testament still remained in the handwriting of the authors; but what became of them afterwards, no man can tell. We can only boast of transcripts of different ages. The most ancient manuscripts of the New Testament are the Codex Alexandrinus, a most precious relic of Christian antiquity. It consists of four folio volumes: the three first containing the Old Testament and Apocryphal Books; the fourth comprising the New Testament, together with the Epistles of Clement to the Corinthians; the Apocryphal Psalms, ascribed to Solomon, and some liturgical hymns. In the New Testament there is wanting the beginning, as far as Matt. xxv. 6; likewise from John vi. 50; viii. 52; and from 2 Cor. iv. 13 to xii. 7. This manuscript was brought from Alexandria, in Egypt, in the year 1623, and since the year 1752 has been deposited in the British Museum. It is written in uncial, or capital letters.

The Codex Vaticanus, or Vatican Manuscript, which is preserved in the Vatican Library at Rome, is also written on vellum, in uncial characters. It wants the Old Testament, from

Gen. i. to xlvi., and from Psalms cv. to cxxxvii. inclusive; and, in the New Testament, from Hebrews, ch. ix. 14, to the end of the epistle, as well as Paul's other epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon, and the entire book of the Revelations.

The Codex Cantabrigiensis was presented to the University of Cambridge in 1531, by Theodore Beza, after whom it is sometimes called the Codex Bezae. It is a Greek-Latin manuscript, and contains the Four Gospels and Acts of the Apostles; besides these manuscripts, others can be mentioned, as the Codex Cottomanus, in the Cottonian Library, containing only fragments of the Four Gospels; the Codex Ephremi, and the Codex Claramontanus, of the epistles of Paul. The dates of these manuscripts cannot be certainly fixed; but the oldest of them cannot be referred farther back than the fifth, or perhaps the fourth century, and is posterior to the last book of the New Testament, by at least three hundred years. There is no manuscript of the Old Testament of equal antiquity.

There are various readings, both of the Old and New Testament, which have arisen in consequence of successive transcriptions. As no supernatural influence was exerted upon the minds of the transcribers, without a miracle, every transcript could not have been a faultless representation of the original.

The Jewish critics, called Masorites, about the commencement of the sixth century, had recourse to a canon, which they judged to be infallible, in fixing the true reading of the Hebrew text. This rule they called *Masora*, or tradition, pretending that it was at first given by God to Moses, on Mount Sinai, when he taught him, first, its true reading; and, secondly, its true interpretation. The former is the subject of the Masora; the latter is that of the Misna, or Collections of Jewish Traditions and Expositions of Sacred Texts, and of the Gemera, or Commentary thereon.

The Masoretic criticisms relate to the division of the books, and sections of books, the number of verses, the notation of omissions, alterations, repetition of words and verses, and other minutiae. To this system also belong the marginal corrections found in Hebrew manuscripts and printed editions of the Old

Testament, termed *hetib*, that is, written; and *heri*, that is, read, or reading; as if to intimate, “write in this manner,” but “read in that manner.” There can be no doubt, that the Masorites have done right in correcting the text; because they have the sanction of apostolical authority. I shall give only one instance.

In the tenth verse of the sixteenth Psalm, we read, in Hebrew, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer” תסיור, *chasiduha*, “thy holy ones, to see corruption.” But on the day of Pentecost, Peter quoted it thus, and applied it to Christ; “Neither wilt thou suffer” תסיור, *chasiducha*, “thy holy One to see corruption.” In this passage, the Masoretic note requires us to read it in the singular, by marking the *jod*, the sign of the plural, as redundant. And this is, no doubt, the true reading.

The following causes of various readings have been assigned: the negligence or mistakes of the transcribers; the existence of errors or imperfections in the manuscript copied; critical emendations of the text made by the copyist, without any authority; and wilful corruptions, made to serve the purpose of a party. Mistakes thus produced in one copy, would, of course, be propagated through all successive copies made from it, each of which might have peculiar faults of its own; so that various readings would thus be increased, in proportion to the number of transcripts made.

As in all manuscripts, errors more or fewer in number, are to be found, it is therefore by a collation of manuscripts that we may hope to obtain a faithful representation of the sacred books, as they were delivered to the Church by the inspired writers.

In estimating the value of manuscripts, preference is given to the most ancient, because they approach nearer to the time of the sacred writers, and have been less frequently transcribed. The antiquity of a manuscript is ascertained by testimony, or by internal marks, and particularly by the form of letters. Those which have been written in *uncial* letters, as they are called, are supposed to be the oldest. Again, those manuscripts are most esteemed which have been written with great care,

not only because we may conclude that they are faithful copies of the older manuscripts from which they were transcribed, but because, when a various reading occurs, we have reason to believe that it was not introduced by the copyist, but was found in the manuscript before him.

The means by which the true reading is to be determined, are : manuscripts, the most ancient, and best editions ; ancient versions ; parallel passages ; quotations made from the Scriptures in the writings of the early fathers of the Christian Church ; and conjectural criticisms. All these sources are to be used with great judgment and caution ; and the common reading ought not to be rejected, but upon the strongest evidence.

Critics have divided the manuscripts of the New Testament, of which above five hundred have been consulted, into classes ; assigning to each different degrees of authority. Griesbach has established three classes ; the Alexandrine, the Occidental or Western, and the Oriental or Byzantine, and has given the preference to the first. He has distinguished them by the name of *recensions* or editions. Scholz has found out five recensions ; the Alexandrine, the Occidental, the Asiatic, the Byzantine, and the Cyprian. Mathaei has rejected all these divisions, and maintained that there is only one class of manuscripts, containing what others have called the Byzantine text. The system of F. Notau, which is the result of a most laborious investigation, proposes three recensions, viz. the Egyptian, the Palestine, and the Byzantine ; and gives the preference to the latter, on which the *textus receptus* is founded.

From this short review of the different opinions entertained by learned men, it appears that some degree of uncertainty still rests upon the subject, and that after all that has been done the field is still open to new inquirers.

The limits of this chapter will not permit me to enlarge on this subject ; I shall, therefore, content myself by referring you to some of the books and authors which treat on Sacred Criticism.

Horne's Introduction, Gerard's Institutes of Biblical Criticism, *Institutio Interpretis Novi Testamenti*, by Ernesti, The Prolegomena of Mill, Wetstein, Griesbach and others.

I shall conclude by giving you a short account of the principal editions of the New Testament.

The first is the Complutensian, which was printed at Complutum, or Alcala, in Spain, in A. D. 1514. It was prepared and published under the patronage of Cardinal Ximenes. The manuscripts used by the editors, which are now lost, were of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, and consequently possessed little intrinsic value.

The first edition of the New Testament, by Erasmus, appeared in A. D. 1516, and was followed by several other editions. It is not considered to be of much value as a critical work; and the manuscripts which he consulted were not many, nor of great antiquity.

Robert Stephens published his edition in A. D. 1546. He adhered closely to the Complutensian and Erasman editions, but not servilely, for he has adopted various readings on the authority of manuscripts, which were consulted to the number of fifteen.

Beza gave his first edition to the world in A. D. 1565. Although he was in possession of an ancient manuscript of the Gospels and Acts, and another of the Epistles of Paul; although he had access to a collection of various readings by Stephens, and had an opportunity of consulting the Syriac version, which had been recently published, he is said not to have made a full use of these advantages.

In the year 1624 an edition was printed at the press of Elzevir, without a name. The author is unknown, but whoever he was, he has formed the text upon the edition of Stephens and Beza. This is called the *Textus receptus*, because since that time it has been admitted into all common editions.

But, as it regards the *Textus receptus*, we must not be led by ignorance or prejudice to consider it as so sacred that no alteration ought to be made in it: it may be superseded by a text more carefully compiled. Too little as yet has been done to render the labours of modern critics unnecessary. Finally, I would observe that the various readings found in the Sacred Books ought in nowise to shake the faith of uninformed Christians.

Although thirty thousand various readings have been collected by Mill, and a much greater number by Wetstein and Griesbach; yet it must be remembered that of the various readings many have no authority, being found only in one manuscript or two; others have only some degree of probability; and those which appear to be well supported, very often consist in the omission or insertion of the article, or some little word, which does not affect the sense; in the order of words and phrases, in the spelling of proper names, and other matters equally insignificant.

Of all the many thousand readings that have been discovered, none have been found that affect our faith, or destroy a single moral precept of the Gospel. We are now fully satisfied that we possess substantially the same text which was exhibited in the autographs of the Old and New Testaments.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STUDY AND INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

To ascertain the genuine text of the Scriptures is indeed an important subject. The next office, however, of criticism is to investigate and discover their meaning, that we may be enabled to understand and believe them.

The languages in which they were originally written were vernacular to those who primarily received them, but they have long since ceased to be spoken.

The first requisite, then, to the study of the Scriptures, is an acquaintance with the languages in which they were composed.

The Scriptures have come down to us in two languages. The Old Testament in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek. A part of Ezra, a verse in Jeremiah, and a part of Daniel were written in Chaldee, and all the rest in Hebrew.

The Scriptures being the only books which now exist in that language, an acquaintance with the kindred languages, the Chaldaic, the Syriac, and the Arabic, has been considered of great use.

Critics inform us, that "they discover roots, or primitives, which are not found in the Bible, though their derivatives occur there; and by so doing, point out the signification of roots, and consequently of their derivatives; that they ascertain the precise signification of roots, and consequently of their derivatives, the signification of which had been only fixed by conjecture; that they afford the best, and where the ancient versions vary in translating them, the only means of determining, with certainty, the signification of such words as occur but once, or very seldom in the Bible; that they enable us to discover all the senses of words, some of which had only been collected from the Bible, though others would have suited particular passages; in particular, that they discover the primary signification of many roots; and that they assist us to understand the meaning of phrases, or idiomatical combinations of words, which are found in the Bible, but the exact import of which could not be determined by it."

In understanding the Greek of the New Testament, although there are many books written in that language, yet an acquaintance with classical Greek alone will not fully qualify us to interpret the Gospels and Epistles; not only because Syriac and Latin words occur in them, but because they abound in foreign idioms, and use words in peculiar senses, which were unknown to the natives of Greece.

By a critical knowledge of the languages of the Scriptures, we ascertain the grammatical sense, and may be able to translate them into our own language so as to express the meaning with greater fidelity.

In interpreting Scripture, and in order to ascertain its true sense, we must,

In the first place, compare it with itself. The Scriptures being written under the direction and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, we may rest assured that there is no real contradiction

in the sacred pages; and that there is a harmony among its parts which tends to one end—our instruction in the system of religion. It will therefore throw light upon one part, and bring into view other parts which are allied to it.

In the second place, in studying the Scriptures, it is necessary to attend to their scope or design. In not attending to their design, we may easily be led into error. For instance, Paul teaches justification by faith, and excludes works; James teaches justification before God by works. Here, then, in order to reconcile these two apostles, we must pay attention to the design they had in writing. The design of Paul was to instruct his brethren in the important doctrine of justification without the works of the law; and that of James to refute the error of those who perverted the doctrine of Paul, rested too much on faith, and imagined that a man would be justified by it, although he continued to live in sin. As the one speaks of justification before God, and the other of justification before men, there is no contradiction in ascribing the one to faith, and the other to works.

In the third place, it is necessary to attend to the nature of the composition in different passages, which is literal or figurative. For instance, when our Lord said to the Jews, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," they imagined that he referred to the second temple, whereas he spoke of the temple of his body. At the institution of the sacred supper, he called the bread his body, by a common trope, giving the name of the thing signified to the sign, as is evident from the nature of the case, as well as from the use of the same trope in other passages. The style of prophecy is highly figurative. The language of the parables, which occur both in the Old and New Testament, is also figurative. To the right interpretation of the parables, it is necessary to keep in view the main design, and not to explain minutely every particular, because some particulars are evidently introduced merely to complete the narrative, or to adorn it. It is ridiculous, in the parable of the prodigal, to pretend to tell us what is meant by the fatted calf, and what by the ring which

was put on his finger, and the shoes which were put upon the feet, as nothing was intended but to teach us that the return of a sinner is acceptable to God, and that he is invested with the honours and privileges of a son.

In the fourth place, another assistance in explaining the Scripture, is the analogy of faith, which signifies that we should explain passages that are obscure or doubtful by the general sense of Scripture, previously ascertained. The sense of Scripture may be certainly known; and having ascertained the general doctrines which are taught therein, we are authorized to apply them to the elucidation of obscurities, and to interpret, in conformity to them, such passages as, taken by themselves, do not convey a definite sense.

The external aids in interpreting the Scriptures, are chronology, geography, profane history and natural, and ancient customs and manners. Chronology shows the order and connection of the various events therein recorded, and enables us to ascertain the accomplishment of many prophecies, and sometimes leads to the discovery and correction of mistakes in numbers and dates, which have crept into particular texts. Geography makes us acquainted with the different countries which the Scriptures represent to our view. Without the knowledge of profane history, many parts of the Bible would be unintelligible; and, in particular, all the prophetic parts would be words without meaning. Natural history makes us acquainted with the arts of life—with plants and animals, several of which are unknown to us, but are described by philosophers and travellers; and there are frequent allusions to husbandry, gardening, commerce, and the pastoral life. The knowledge of ancient customs and manners is indispensably necessary to understand many passages of Holy Writ. Mention is made of going up to the house-top, walking, praying, and conversing upon it. All this must appear strange to one who is unacquainted with ancient customs; but it will no longer appear strange as soon as he learns that, in Judea, the roofs of the houses were flat, and were accessible by steps erected for the purpose. Again: We might wonder that our

Lord speaks of putting new wine into new bottles for safety, and not into old ones, which might burst; because, from the nature of the bottles which we use, greater danger is to be apprehended from the new, which have not been tried, than from the old, which have stood the test. The reason is this: Bottles being then made of skins, those which had been often moistened and dried, and exposed to the heat of the sun, were more apt to give way, than such as had been recently made.

These are a few hints respecting the means to be employed in the study of the Scriptures. There is, however, one thing of which I would remind you, that the literal ought always to be considered as the true and only sense of Scripture, except in parables and allegories, and in passages relating to typical persons and events, and in general where figurative language is used; but in historical narration, in the enumeration of doctrines and moral precepts, the grammatical sense alone is to be considered.

To conclude, I would remark that the Scriptures are the only standard of religion, in opposition to the church of Rome, which makes tradition the standard of religion as well as the Scriptures. Protestants acknowledge the Scriptures alone as the rule of faith. They have drawn up articles of confession, but still the great Protestant principle is, that all appeals should ultimately be made to the Bible. When the question is, whether a particular opinion is agreeable to the doctrine of the church, the proper appeal is to the standards of the church; but when the question is, whether a particular opinion is true, the appeal ought to be to the Scriptures.

An acquaintance with the original languages, and the rules of interpretation, is necessary to enable us to ascertain the meaning of the Scriptures. They are of essential importance to ministers of the Gospel. But remember, a minister of religion should labour not only to understand their meaning, but to feel their power. By the diligent use of his natural talents, he may preach to the advantage of his hearers; but without the power, he will be like a lamp which wastes away as it gives light to others, and then expires. That he may be truly

useful and animated, and his heart affected, he must be deeply impressed with the alarming and consoling truths which he so often declares to others. How can he call upon his hearers to believe and obey, while he himself is cold and lifeless? In such a state of mind, his exhortations must freeze upon his lips, or if they are pronounced with earnestness, it is the earnestness of hypocrisy, for which, in the hour of reflection, he must condemn himself. But let him have the Bible in his head and in his heart, and the knowledge of its truths will make him wise; its inspiring influence will render him eloquent, and he will be the happy instrument of promoting the cause of religion, the glory of God, and the eternal salvation of immortal souls, redeemed by the suffering and death of the Son of God.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON GOD: HIS EXISTENCE.

THE existence of God is a primary article of both natural and revealed religion. If there is a God, he should be the great object of adoration, praise, and confidence, of all his intelligent creatures. If there is no such being, there can be no religion, no moral sense, obligation, or duty; but every one is at liberty to act as inclination or self-interest prompts, without the fear of retribution, or the hope of reward from a higher power superintending the affairs of men.

The existence of God is a truth which forces itself so immediately and irresistibly upon the mind, that we ought rather to admit it as a self-evident principle, than attempt to prove it. The belief may be said to be natural to man. Hence, some have doubted whether a real atheist, that is, an atheist from principle and conviction, has ever existed. But as some have been led by their folly and depravity, to advance the sentiment, that "there is no God," and endeavour to persuade themselves and others of its truth, it is necessary to prove this

fundamental article of religion, in order that those who have paid little attention to the subject, may be able to give a reason of their faith when called upon, and those who are already convinced, may be confirmed and established, by having the truth more deeply impressed on their minds.

The usual methods pursued in demonstrating the existence of God, are two. The first, called the argument *à priori*, infers the effect from the cause, and consequently supposes something before that, the existence of which is deduced from it. Doctor Clarke reasons in this manner: nothing in being can be prior to that Being which is the first cause and original of all things; hence, there must be in nature a ground or reason of the existence of the first cause; otherwise its existence would be owing to or depend upon mere chance; the existence, therefore, of the first cause is necessary—necessary absolutely and in itself; and therefore that necessity is, *à priori*, and in the order of nature, the ground or reason of its existence.

The argument *à posteriori*, infers the cause from the effect, and proves the existence of the Creator from the works of creation. It is by this kind of argument we rise to the knowledge of the uncaused existence of the Author of the Universe, and not by abstract speculations on necessity. We should have never known that he exists, but from our own existence, and the existence of other objects around us; and as in this way we ascertain that he does and must exist, it is, to say the least, unintelligible, if not absurd, to prove his existence *à priori*.

I now proceed to lay before you the proofs by which the existence of God is evinced.

My first argument in favour of this truth, is the connexion that exists between cause and effect. The human mind is so constructed, that whenever we behold an effect, a result, a production of any kind, we always ascribe it to some cause. Not even the fall of a stone or an apple takes place without a cause. Nothing can happen, no effect can be produced without a cause. Now, when we behold the universe, we see, so to speak, one vast effect or result, one immense work or production; and as every particular object which is the subject

of our knowledge has its cause, we naturally and irresistibly conclude, that the universe, as a whole, must also have a cause of its existence; and that cause must be efficient, giving energy to all other second or final causes; it must be prior to all other causes; extrinsic or independent of itself, adequate, so as to account for what our eyes witness, eternal, intelligent, all-wise and powerful; in other words, God.

In the next place, the being of God may be argued from the consideration, that, as something now exists, something must have existed from eternity. We, and other beings around us, exist. We are assured of our own existence by consciousness; and of the existence of other things, by the evidence of our senses; hence we infer that something must always have existed; for if there was a time when nothing existed, there could not now exist any thing; for nothing can never produce something. This is a plain, self-evident truth. And therefore if any thing create itself, it must be something, and exist before it is created; for creation is an act; and a nonentity cannot act. And at the same time, to be created, it is necessary that it should not exist; for if it does already exist, it cannot afterwards begin to exist.

Hence we learn, that any thing, to create itself, must exist, in order to create; and not exist in order to be created; that is, it must exist, and not exist at the same time, which is a plain and palpable contradiction. And therefore as it is certain something now exists, it is equally certain something always existed, and never began to be. Hence, the existence of an Eternal Being, the cause of all things, is as certain, as that any thing now exists.

This proposition is admitted by atheists themselves; but in order to avoid the inference which so naturally presents itself, that the Being, who always and necessarily exists, is God, he has recourse to different schemes, by which he endeavours to satisfy himself of the non-existence of God.

No, says the atheist, that which existed from eternity is matter, and the things that now exist, took their present form from a fortuitous concourse of atoms of matter.

To this objection we reply : it is absurd to attribute such great perfections as eternity and self-existence to such a sluggish and inert being as matter. Who can believe that matter, which is incapable of motion, unless impressed upon by an agent extrinsic to itself, or produced by fixed laws, which indicate a being superior to itself, could get original mind, and be the cause of intelligence ? We might as well suppose nothing capable of producing something, as that a being without activity and intelligence, should produce a being active and intelligent. If matter be that which is eternal, independent, and the cause of all things, how, we may ask, came the world to assume its present form, the heavenly bodies their order and beauty, and the earth its inhabitants ? By chance, say the atheists. Atoms of matter floating at random through the immensity of space, came together, and formed the universe by chance.

This opinion contradicts the most obvious dictates of common sense — that such unity, order, harmony, and appearance of intelligence and design should be the effect of chance. Suppose a house, built according to the rules of art, with convenient apartments, were found in a wilderness, or on an uninhabited island. Would any man, even an atheist, suppose that this building was owing to chance, or had assumed this form from floating atoms ? Would not the conviction immediately impress his mind that some intelligent architect, though unknown to him, had before been in this place, and reared the edifice ?

It was in this manner that Cicero, a Heathen writer, reasoned on this subject. “Who,” says Cicero, “can be so mad, that when he looks up towards the heavens, does not believe that there is a God ? The beauty of the world, the order of the celestial bodies, the revolution of the sun, the moon, and stars, sufficiently indicate, by the sight of them, that all these things are not by chance, and force us to confess, that there is some excellent and eternal nature, worthy the admiration of mankind. If any one should go into a school, and view the order and discipline therein, he would immediately conclude that there was some one who presided in this institution. In like manner, let any one contemplate the perpetual and certain motions, the

vicissitudes and order of the heavenly bodies, so many, and so great, he must necessarily confess, that all these things are governed by some intelligence. But since neither human power, nor mind, could effect these things, God alone can be the architect and ruler of so great a work." "I cannot understand," says this same author, in another place, "why the same persons, who suppose that this order could arise from chance, might not suppose, if the forms of the letters of the alphabet were cut in metal, and scattered about, that histories might be formed in this way, so as to be read. Because, if the fortuitous concourse of atoms could produce a world, why not a house, a temple, a book, which are far less difficult."

Again, says the atheist, that which was from eternity is not God, but the universe itself, existing in an eternal succession or series of causes and effects; or, one thing produced another from eternity. But every succession must, in the very nature of the case, have a beginning—every series of causes and effects a first cause. Without a beginning there can be no succession, and without a first cause there can be no second, or third, or series of causes. No man, in his senses, would say of a chain made up of distinct links, which may be traced as far as they proceed, that it had but one end.

The third argument for the existence of God is founded on the proofs of design in the universe. Design proves a designer.

Whenever we see the evidences of skill and contrivance—the adaptation of means to the end—we necessarily infer that there must have been a contriver. If, for instance, a savage, in his rambles, should find a watch which had been lost on the way, no sooner had he examined its mechanism, and understood its design, than he would conclude it had a maker.

Now, it is by the same simple, common process of reasoning, that the human mind infers, from his works, the existence of a Deity. The universe, from the meanest blade of grass, or insect, up to man, and from man to the immense spheres that move in the firmament, presents us with the most striking, consummate proofs of skill and wisdom, of ends to be answered, and means adapted to the purpose.

The human frame, with all its parts, so fearfully and wonderfully made — the animal creation, their nature and construction adapted to the elements in which they move, their mode of life, and means of existence — the vegetable kingdom, the plant, the tree, the shrub that grows — the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets and their orbits, and revolution round the sun — the succession of day and night — the return of the seasons of the year, summer and winter, spring and fall — all these things declare the existence of that Being who is “wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.” Proofs of design — ends aimed at, and means employed to accomplish those ends, are seen in all these parts of God’s creation; and, as design proves a designer, they prove the existence of that Being, who, in the beginning, said, “Let there be light, and there was light.”

It is impossible to illustrate this part of the subject as we wish, confined as we are to the narrow limits of this Chapter. I shall therefore refer you to authors who have treated the subject more at length; and, among others, I would direct you to Paley’s *Natural Theology*.

Another argument for the existence of God, is founded on the general consent of mankind. It has been believed in all ages and nations, and is, therefore, consonant to the natural, unbiassed dictates of the mind.

It has been asserted, that some nations have been found without religion. But the assertion needs confirmation; and, were it established, it would only prove that man has no innate idea of God, and that his reason may become so obscured, as to place him but one remove above the brute creation. Admitting the general agreement of mankind, in respect to the divine existence, atheists endeavour to account for it from the principle of fear; or, the artifice of statesmen to give authority to the laws. But, to refer it to the principle of fear, would be to put the effect before the cause; most men would conclude, that the fear of the Deity was the result of his being; but, according to the atheist’s mode of reasoning, terror framed the Deity. And, as it regards the artifice of statesmen, we ask,

who was the first statesman that invented it — or the holy alliance that first combined to impose it on their subjects; or, what was yet more difficult, upon themselves?

In whatever way we may account for it, the fact cannot be controverted, that men have, in every age, and in the rudest state of society, had an idea of a higher power; and this general consent proves that the idea of a God, if it be not innate, or natural to man, or suggested to him as soon as he reflects upon the subject, is yet so consonant to reason, that, when it is proposed, it is immediately approved and received.

Finally, the existence of God may be inferred from a variety of facts in the history of human affairs. Every argument which proves a superintending Providence, proves that there is an intelligent and active Being, by whom the universe is governed. Supernatural facts, such as miracles and prophecy, indicate the agency of a Being, greater than nature and its laws. I do not mean to quote the Scriptures on this occasion as authoritative; but merely refer to them as records, the genuineness of which has been fully established, and from which we learn that miracles have been performed, and that predictions have been delivered many ages ago, which have been subsequently fulfilled with the utmost exactness. Miracles prove that there is a Being who sways the sceptre of the universe, and is possessed of power sufficient to control its laws. The same conclusion may be drawn from prophecy, which, supposing knowledge in the prophet that does not belong to man, must have proceeded from an intelligent Being, to whom the future is as manifest as the present, and who possesses such dominion over physical and moral causes, over the material system, and the thoughts and volitions of men, as to accomplish with unerring certainty whatever he had foretold. Such are the arguments by which we demonstrate this fundamental doctrine of religion. These arguments, when taken together and duly considered, must give complete satisfaction to every person who fairly weighs the evidences by which they are supported, and a conviction which nothing can resist but prejudice and obstinate incredulity.

CHAPTER XV.

ON GOD: HIS NATURE AND UNITY.

IN the preceding chapter we have proved the existence of God by a variety of arguments. We proceed to consider his unity and nature, and at the same time to answer the objections opposed to the doctrine.

There is but one God; one self-existing, independent Being. The unity of God may be proved, first, from the unity of design and agency in creation and providence; secondly, by metaphysical arguments; and thirdly, from the Holy Scriptures. The unity of design and agency in creation and providence, proves the existence of but one God. So far as we are able to understand the works of creation and providence, we discern a general simplicity and harmony in the nature and operations of all things. Everywhere we perceive one set of laws, in accordance with which all things proceed in their course. The same causes produce uniformly the same effects in every place and period. Man has one origin, form, life, system of faculties, character, and termination. All things in this world are made subservient to his use and happiness; and are plainly fitted by one design, and conducted by one agency with exact regularity. Animals are born in one manner, and exhibit the same life, powers, and tendencies. Vegetables spring from the same seed, germinate by the same means; assume the same form; sustain the same qualities, exist through the same duration, and come to the same end. Day and night uniformly return by a single power, and with exact regularity. With the same regularity the seasons pursue their circuit. The sun shines, illuminates, warms, and moves the planets by a single law, and with exact uniformity. By one law the planets keep their orbits, and perform their revolutions. The face of the heavens is but one.

Thus all things, so far as our knowledge extends, present to

our view a single design, regularly executed by a single agency. But unity of design is a proof of one designer, and unity of agency of one agent.

Secondly, Reason teaches us that there can be but one first cause. Nature is one, as we have seen — appears to be the product of one almighty agent; and for all the effects which we observe, one such agent was sufficient. The power of one all-perfect Being was sufficient to create the heavens and the earth; the goodness of one Being is sufficient to supply the wants of all animated creatures. One Being, possessed of these attributes, is sufficient to guide us through life, to support us and protect us from evil, and to animate and realize our hopes of futurity. Another would be useless and unnecessary.

Again: Reason teaches us there can be but one infinite Being. Suppose there be two; neither of them can be acknowledged to be God, unless both be acknowledged to be infinitely perfect. But how can there be two infinitely perfect beings? It is contradictory to assert that there are two such beings, as it is to say that there are two infinite extensions. As these could not be, without materially penetrating each other—that is, unless they be in reality one, or neither of them be true extensions, so two infinitely perfect beings cannot be conceived, unless the perfections of the one be contained in the other, and consequently, then, they are in fact not two, but one, or neither of them is infinitely perfect.

Again: There can be but one independent Being. The supposition of more than one, deprives them all of independence. If there were two Gods, they would be possessed of equal power; it would be impossible, therefore, for the one to act, without the consent of the other; or if he should proceed to act according to his own will, he would immediately be opposed by power as great as his own. If it be said, that as both would be perfect in wisdom, they would always concur in their views, all that follows is, that there would be no struggle between them; but still it would be owing to concert, that either of them would act, and therefore both would be dependent, each upon the will of the other. How different are

such beings from the true God, who doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth!

The great and important truth, the unity of God, is expressly and plainly taught in Holy Scripture. Deut. vi. 4. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." Isa. xlv. 6. "I am the first and the last, and besides me there is no God." Mark xii. 32. "There is one God, and there is none other but he." 1 Sam. ii. 2; Psal. xviii. 31; Isa. xlvi. 9; 1 Cor. viii. 4, 6.

The doctrine of the divine unity is opposed to polytheism. The heathens, both ancient and modern, have agreed in the belief of a multiplicity of Gods. Of the time when, and the manner in which idolatry arose, we have no probable account. It appears that before the flood, Theism was the primary religion, but that idolatry made its appearance immediately after that event; for the family of Abraham were worshippers of strange gods at the time when he was called to leave his country and kindred. It is possible that it originated in the following manner. - Dazzled by the splendour of the heavenly bodies, men began to do homage to them as visible representatives of the Deity; and that, from their real or apparent motions, they came to conceive them to be animated, and ascribed divinity to them. In addition to the catalogue of deities by mistaken gratitude and admiration, those who had been distinguished by eminent talents, illustrious achievements, and actions honourable and beneficial to their country, were, after their death, added to the list, so that the heaven of the ancient heathens was filled with heroes, legislators, and the inventors of useful arts.

Thus we learn that men, not willing to retain God in their knowledge, became vain in their imaginations, and proceeded to worship and serve the creation instead of the Creator. The true God was invisible to them, and they wished a God whom they could see. Hence they adored the heavenly bodies—the sun, the moon, the planets, and the stars.

It is, however, worthy of notice, that amidst the errors of the heathen world, some traces are discovered of the original

belief in the notion which generally obtained of a Supreme Being. Some of the ancient philosophers believed in, and taught, the unity of God, infinitely superior to the popular divinities; a Being incorporeal, invisible, incomprehensible, possessed of all perfections, and to be adored by devout meditation. Even by the vulgar, amidst the grossest idolatry, one deity was acknowledged God—to be superior to the other objects of religious respect, and was honoured with the title of the Father of gods and men.

The unity of God is opposed to dualism. Dualism is the belief in the existence of a second original cause, or the doctrine of two principles. This doctrine was held by the ancient Persians, and adopted by certain heretics, in the early ages of the church; and particularly by Manes, who incorporated it with a variety of notions, borrowed from the Christian system. The doctrine is founded on the mixed state of things in our world.

Good and evil are blended together. Hence men appear to have argued in this manner: The good and perfect Cause cannot be the source of evil; particularly, he cannot, in any sense, be concerned or connected with the existence of *moral evil*. Such evil, however, exists; of course there must have been some other cause beside the good and perfect One. The argument is specious, but erroneous. For, should it be admitted that evil cannot proceed immediately from the perfect God; yet cannot God create such moral beings, as, left to themselves, may yield to temptation, and thus fall into sin? It cannot, I presume, be shown, that God is obliged to prevent the existence of moral evil, originated in this manner, nor of natural evil, as its proper punishment.

The Divine Unity is opposed, in the opinion of some, by the doctrine of the Trinity. How is it possible, say the adversaries of this doctrine—how is it possible to conceive three distinct persons, without conceiving them to be three distinct Beings. Hence, they conclude, that the doctrine of the Trinity ought to be rejected, as subversive of this primary article of religion, and contrary to the clearest dictates of reason. It is

granted, that the same thing cannot be one, and three, in the same respect; and were this the doctrine we hold, there would be no presumption in rejecting it; but this is a gross misrepresentation. Trinitarians believe God to be one in one sense, and three in another — one in essence, and three, as to the mode of his existence.

Having shown that God is one, self-existing, independent Being, we are naturally desirous to obtain some more intimate knowledge of Him, and to ascertain what his nature is. And here I would observe, that God is not a material Being. If he were material he could not be immense, nor unlimited, nor immutable; and, as two bodies, according to the doctrine of the impenetrability of matter, cannot occupy the same portion of space, were God material, he would be necessarily excluded from every place which is filled up by the visible creation.

The Anthropomorphites, as their name imports, believed that God had a bodily shape; because, it is said, that man was created in the image of God; they supposed that it had reference to his body, as well as his soul. But the passages of Scripture which have been supposed to favour this opinion, have been misunderstood. The image of God, in which man was created, is expressive of a moral resemblance to his maker, and is elsewhere said to consist in knowledge, righteousness and holiness.

When bodily members are ascribed to God, this must be understood in a figurative sense, and in accommodation to our modes of thinking. Eyes and ears, for instance, are expressive of his knowledge, and hands, of the power by which he performs his mighty works.

By the preceding reasoning, we are led to conclude, that God is a Spirit. We are indeed unacquainted with the nature of a spirit. So much we know, that it is not compound; that it is not divisible; and that it is not the object of sight or touch. God is a living Being; matter is dead; but life is the attribute of spirit: and, as there is life in the universe, it is a dictate of reason, that there cannot be more in the effect, than there is in the cause, we reason, that God is, as the Scriptures call him, “the living God.”

God is an intelligent Being, as is evident from the appearances of design in his works. Knowledge is an attribute of spirit, or mind. Matter cannot think or feel, and therefore is incapable of intelligence. God is an active Being. Matter is essentially inactive. As it cannot move of itself, so it cannot stop, or alter its motion. Power belongs to God, and it belongs to him because he is a Spirit.

We conclude, that as the essence of God is spiritual, he is the object of mental contemplation. Concealed from the eyes of mortals, he has condescended to address himself to our senses by his works and word; but the senses serve only to convey to the mind materials of reflection, from which we, in some measure, though imperfect, are enabled to comprehend and conceive of that Being, whose glory the highest created understanding cannot fully comprehend.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ETERNITY AND IMMUTABILITY OF GOD.

THE attributes of God are usually divided into two classes; the incommunicable, and the communicable. The incommunicable are those of which there is no vestige or resemblance in creatures; as eternity, immutability, absolute eternity, immensity. The communicable perfections are those to which there is something corresponding in creatures; as, knowledge, wisdom, goodness, and justice.

We begin, in this Chapter, with the eternity and immutability of God.

Eternity, with respect to God, is the perpetual continuance of his Being; without beginning, end, or succession. It has been defined to be the interminable possession of life, complete,

perfect, and at once. *Æternitas est interminabilis vitæ tota simul et perfecta possessio.*

The eternity of God may be proved from his necessary existence. His existence is not contingent, but necessary; in and of himself; to suppose any anterior reason of his existence would be to strip Him, at once, of eternity and independence; and would prove that we have erred in conceiving Him to be God, and that the name ought to be transferred to the prior cause. It is evident, that what exists by necessity of nature, must have always existed.

That God will exist to eternity, is evident from his independent existence. There is no superior being upon whom he is dependent for existence, and in his nature there is no principle of decay. A principle, says Plato, "has no origin, for all things arose from a principle; but the first principle arises from nothing, neither were it a first principle, if it were originated by some other. And, if it has no beginning, it can have no end."

That God is without succession, will appear, when we consider, that if his duration were successive, or proceeded by moments, days, and years, then there must have been some first moment, day and year, when he began to exist; which is incompatible with the idea of eternity. If this were the case, he would not be immense, immutable, and perfect, for he would be older one minute than he was before; which cannot be said of Him; and, as God is perfect in knowledge, knowing all things, the past, present, and to come, his knowledge proves Him to be without successive duration: "he sees the present without a medium, the past without recollection, and the future without foresight. To Him, all truths are but one idea, all places but one point, and all times but one moment."

Divine revelation confirms these natural dictates of reason in the account which it gives of the divine existence, where it tells us that he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; that he is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending; that a thousand years are with him as one day, and one day as a thousand years. Ps. xc. 2; 1 Tim. vi. 16.

The immutability of God is the most perfect continuance in existence, without any actual or possible change. The doctrine is clearly taught in Scripture; and, as we shall soon see, demonstrable by reason. "I am Jehovah; I change not." Mal. iii. 6. "God is the same, and his years shall have no end." Ps. cii. 2, 5, 27. "He is the Father of Lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." James i. 17.

Mutability is characteristic of all created beings. The heavenly bodies are often changing; upon the surface of the earth, nothing is stationary. The action of the elements and internal convulsions frequently change their aspect. Trees grow and fade; animals appear and perish; even the rocks decay, and are sometimes violently moved from their places. Man is subject to innumerable changes in life, and death at last turns him to corruption. Superior beings, the angels in their original state, were subject to mutation, as the apostasy of many has shown. God alone is immutable. This is evident from his necessary existence; whatever exists by necessity of nature, must always be the same—the same now as it formerly was; the same hereafter as it now is. To say that a being is necessarily existent, and yet may be changed, is with the same breath to say, that it is not necessarily existent. A contingent being may undergo a change without the destruction of its essence; some of its qualities may be altered, it may become less wise, less active, or less virtuous than it was, because there is nothing in such a being, which necessarily infers its continuance in a particular state. But with respect to a necessary being, we cannot conceive it to be changed without taking away the ground of its existence, or losing sight of its existence. Whatever, therefore, exists by necessity of nature, must be immutable in essence, and in all its properties.

The immutability of God may be proved from the perfect simplicity of his essence. There is no mixture or composition in it, and consequently there can be no addition, or subtraction, or transposition of parts, by which changes are effected in

bodies; and as God is essentially perfect, he is therefore incapable of change, being fixed and immoveable from eternity to eternity. Once more, if any change could take place in God, it must originate either with himself or some other being. But it is impossible to conceive any motive to cause a change in himself, and it is impossible to allow it to be practicable in another, for this would deprive him of his independence, and of all his other perfections. If any change take place, it must be for the better or worse; if for the better, God would not be a perfect being; and if for the worse, he would cease to be the best of beings.

Let us proceed to inquire in what respect God is immutable.

First, he is immutable in his existence. God never had a beginning, and he never will have an end; and hence his immutability coincides with his eternity. There was a time when there were no created beings,—but then he was; and there will be a time when, it may be, this visible creation shall be annihilated,—but then he will be. “They,” as the Psalmist saith, “shall perish, but thou shalt endure. As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.”

Secondly, he is immutable in knowledge. The knowledge of all created beings is finite. Man comes into the world altogether destitute of knowledge; he has no innate ideas, but merely is endowed with the capacity of acquiring knowledge by the use of his senses, and by other means employed for the improvement of his intellectual faculties. Thus, creatures are always subject to a change in the exercise of their mental faculties, progressing in their knowledge to higher and higher attainments; but the knowledge of God is infinite as his essence. He knows himself; he knows all things which now are, which have been, and which shall be. He knows all possible things which his power could create. All things are constantly before him, because he is present with them; he can have no new discoveries, who is already in every place where there exists any object of knowledge. “He,” as the Psalmist

expresses himself, Ps. cxxxix. 3, "compasseth our path, and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways."

As the knowledge of God is universal, so it is infallible. He cannot be mistaken; because every thing presents itself to Him as it is in itself, and in all its connections and consequences.

Thirdly, God is immutable in his decrees. Men often change their designs and purposes for various reasons, but it is not so with God; there can be no cause or reason why he should alter his purposes, because his knowledge is comprehensive, and perfect among all possible ends; having selected the best, and fixed upon the most proper means of accomplishing them, he cannot be induced to deviate from his choice. No new views can present themselves to his mind, and it is impossible that any change of circumstances should take place which might induce him to adopt a different order of procedure.

Fourthly, God is immutable in his moral perfections. He is holy and just in all his dispensations. He never repeals or suspends the moral law which he has given for the government of mankind. The same duties are in every age required from men in the same circumstances; in a state of innocence, after the fall, under the Mosaic economy, at all times, and in all ages, man has stood in the same relation to God and his fellow-men; and love to his Maker and his neighbour has been inculcated as the principle of universal obedience. Nowhere does the immutability of the moral perfections of God shine forth with such lustre, as in the mediatorial scheme of man's redemption. Here we behold the astonishing manifestations of his love, and the strictest regard to truth, and justice, and purity. The law which had pronounced the curse upon us, was in nowise changed, but magnified and made honourable, and established in all its rights; and God exhibited to all worlds the unbending rectitude of his nature, and his eternal abhorrence of sin.

Fifthly, God is immutable in his felicity. Variety appears to us to be essential to happiness. But it is not so with God: he is not influenced by the love of variety; he finds eternal

rest and satisfaction in himself. God is happy in the possession of his own resources; he is consummately and permanently blessed, and has no need of any creature to augment his felicity. Hence, the Scripture calls him the happy God, the happy and only Potentate, the Being who has in himself an inexhaustible store of felicity.

It may be objected to the doctrine of the divine immutability, that there are certain facts in the history of the divine dispensations, which seem to be at variance with it. It may be alleged that a change must have taken place in the divine nature, when he created the heavens and the earth, because he, if we may so speak, was alone before he created the universe, and not alone when or after worlds were created. We answer: the change is in the creature, and not in God. The world existed in the divine mind previous to, the same as after, creation. The change therefore produced by creation, is relative as regards the creature, but there is no change with God. Again, it is objected, that as the Scriptures inform us, "the Word was made flesh," a change must have taken place in the Divine Nature at the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity. We reply: the person of the Son of God remained the same. The change was in the creature, in the created nature of the Son of God, and not the Son of God himself.

Once more, it is said, that repentance is ascribed to God in many passages of Holy Writ; as, for instance, in Gen. xi. 6; 1 Samuel xv. ii. But how can these passages, which represent God as having actually changed, be reconciled with his immutability? We answer: that these expressions are predicated of God, in condescension to the weakness of our capacities. When man repents and changes, he takes another course; so when God takes another course, it is expressed by the word repentance. The immutability of God is a source of consolation under all the trials and afflictions of this life. If God is immutable, then we may depend upon it that he will most assuredly fulfil all his promises, and consequently sustain and protect his children at all times, in life and in death. "Yea, mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my

kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee." Isaiah liv. 10.

But how awful is the immutability of God to the impenitent! it insures the execution of his threatenings, as well as the performance of his promises. The workers of iniquity have no hope of escape, without a change in themselves; his justice will pursue them with vengeance, and will certainly overtake them, and fix their doom for ever in the regions of eternal despair. The decree by which it is fixed, is founded on the eternal principle of justice, and is immutable as God himself.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE IMMENSITY AND OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

THE immensity of God, is that perfection by which his attributes are contained within no limits, and by which he is present with all his creatures, and exerts unlimited power in all his works.

A distinction is made between the immensity and omnipresence of God. When we call his essence immense, we mean that it has no limits; when we say that it is omnipresent, we signify that it is wherever creatures are.

The immensity of God is opposed to the opinions of the Heathens, who conceived their numerous deities to be limited beings, and confined to particular places, and who had different provinces assigned to them; 1 Kings xx. 23; and to the notion of Mahomet, who must have believed that God had a bodily shape, and a local residence, since he pretended to have seen him when he was taken up into heaven; and tells us, that between his eyebrows the distance was equal to a journey of three days.

It is true, some of the Heathens, rising above the vulgar superstitions, approximated to more just conceptions of the Supreme Being, and appear to have entertained some notion of his universal presence. Which way soever ye turn, says Seneca, ye make take notice of God meeting you; for nothing is void of him; he himself fills all his works, and is present with the whole creation. Remarkable also is the expression of Virgil; *Jovis omnia plena*—“all things are full of God.” However, we should remember, that when such passages occur in the writings of the ancient Heathens, they admit of an interpretation different from what the words suggest to us; for, by some of the philosophers, God was supposed to be the soul of the world, diffused through all its parts, and consequently a material being.

In opposition to all these opinions, we maintain that God is everywhere present; that he knows all things, and rules over all things; in a word, that he is infinite in essence, as well as wisdom and power. Bodies exist in space. A particular body occupies only a portion of space; and, as it consists of parts, its limits are exactly defined. All this is plain; but not so when we speak of spirits, as they have no parts—no dimensions and figure. We do not understand their relation to space; they have, however, a *ubi*, but they do not fill the place where they are, because they are not material; but they are so in it, as not to be in any other place. Thus, our spirits are so connected with our bodies, that they are where these are, and nowhere else; and there is no doubt that all other created spirits exist in the same manner, in a place. But where is God? Is he in one place, and not in another? We answer: his presence is not local; it is universal. Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Do I not fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord. Jer. xxiii. 23, 24.

We proceed to prove the immensity of God:

First, from reason. God is a being possessed of every possible perfection: because, if only one were wanting, we could conceive of another being, still more perfect. Creatures are limited in their nature, which is evidently an imperfection.

For instance, man, as it respects his sensations, enjoyments and operations, is confined to a narrow sphere. This, his limited nature, is manifestly an imperfection. To suppose, therefore, God to exist in one part of the universe — to be in heaven, but not upon earth — to circumscribe his essence within any boundaries, however widely extended, would be to conceive of Him as being similar to his creatures. It would be easy to imagine a Being still more perfect — one who would be everywhere present at the same time — in heaven, and on earth. Hence it is evident, that it is agreeable to reason, to ascribe immensity to God.

Again, immensity is necessarily implied in all the other perfections of God. We ascribe infinite perfections to the Divine Being — infinite power, infinite wisdom, infinite goodness; and consequently must believe his essence to be infinite: for it would be a manifest absurdity to suppose a being to have infinite perfections, and a finite nature — to be limited and unlimited at the same time. No one will doubt that the divine understanding is infinite; or that God knows all things throughout the whole extent of creation: hence we infer, that he who is the source of intelligence, must be an intelligent Being — the Creator of all things must be acquainted with his own works.

But, how should he know every thing in the universe, if he had a local habitation in any particular portion of space? The universal and particular knowledge of God — his knowledge of all his creatures, without exception — presupposes his immediate presence with them.

Again, the works of creation prove the immensity of the Divine Being. The creation of all things out of nothing, requires almighty power. But how can a being act where it is not? The action of every being, with which we are acquainted, supposes its presence. The actions of men are confined to the spot on which they reside; or, if they act at a distance, their orders are executed by persons employed in their service. But God makes use of no subordinate agents in the creation of the world, and must, therefore, have been present in every portion of space, where any being exists besides himself.

The providential government of the universe proves that the Divine Being is omnipresent; and both reason and revelation unite in bearing testimony to this truth, that the system of nature is upheld by the same power that brought it into existence. To maintain that, after it was created and subject to certain laws, it was left to itself, and that it moves like a well-constructed machine, without requiring the interference of the artist, is absurd, and renders the universe independent of its Maker. The laws by which the system of nature is governed, are nothing but the established and uniform methods according to which his power is exerted. But where the effect is, there also must be the cause; where we see displays of power, there we should seek for him to whom the power belongs. All the movements which we observe in the universe, are so many proofs of a present Deity, although he is not visibly present to mortal eyes; yet the world and all nature declare him to be near.

Secondly, The immensity of God appears from various passages of Holy Scripture: as Deut. iv. 39. "The Lord is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath." 1 Kings, viii. 27. The heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee, says Solomon, in his prayer at the dedication of the temple. See also Psalm cxxxix. 4, 6; Jer. xxiii. 23, 24; and many other passages.

We must take care not to confound the immensity of God with extension; thus, for instance, light fills the solar system by means of rays propagated in all directions from the sun. In like manner, the atmosphere is diffused over the whole globe; but in speaking of God, we must remember that he is a spirit, and that the idea of extension is totally inapplicable to him. Created spirits it may indeed be said are here, but not there; literally speaking, however, we cannot conceive them to fill a portion of space, without contradicting ourselves, and assigning to them one of the properties of body, at the very moment when we speak of them as incorporeal. Does the soul fill a particular part of the body? has the place of an angel dimensions? if so, it would follow that spirits, like

bodies, would be greater or less—that they might be divided, expanded, or compressed; that is, that they are spirits and not spirits, or that there are no such beings as spirits, and those which are called such, are animated nature in an invisible form. To suppose, then, the immensity of the Divine Essence to consist in boundless extension, is to materialize the Deity. We must therefore form a different idea of the Divine immensity; and while we deny that his essence is extended, we must acknowledge that we cannot comprehend this attribute of the Divine nature.

The omnipresence of God does not imply that his essence is mixed with his creatures, as the atmosphere is in contact with the various substances upon earth, and enters into the bodies of animals and vegetables, and is incorporated with them. He is, indeed, most intimately present with them; he animates them, upholds them, and exerts his energy through their whole frame; but his presence neither deifies them, nor makes him partaker of their infirmities.

Though God is intimately present with his creatures, we must not suppose that he is affected by them, or that his happiness is in any wise impaired, to be present in places which would excite uneasy sensations in us. The Divine nature is not passive, or liable to impressions; but as an infinitely perfect and independent Being, he is an undisturbed spectator of human things.

The doctrine of the Divine omnipresence is not inconsistent with those passages of Scripture which represent God as peculiarly present in certain places, and with certain individuals. When it is said of him that he resided in the Temple of Jerusalem, that he is in the souls of good men, and that he dwells in the heaven of heavens, it means that in such places he particularly manifests his glory. In respect to his essence, there is no place where God is more present than in another, nor any person to whom he is nearer than to another; but in some places he discovers himself more distinctly to the external senses, or the internal feelings of his creatures; and we say, God is there, without supposing that he is not where we do not perceive him.

To conclude: The doctrine of the Divine immensity furnishes a powerful motive to restrain us from sin—to excite us to sincerity in religion; and is, at the same time, a source of abundant consolation under all the trials and afflictions to which the righteous may be exposed in this life. With whatever afflictions his faith and patience may be tried, and whatever change of circumstances a wise Providence may appoint him to undergo, although there should be no human heart to sympathize with him, and no kind hand to perform the offices of friendship, he can express his faith and joy in the words of the Psalmist: “Nevertheless, I am continually with thee; thou holdest me by my right hand, thou wilt guide me by thy council, and afterward receive me into glory.” Psalm lxxiii. 23, 24.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM OF GOD.

THE knowledge of God is that attribute of his divine nature by which he perceives and knows all things. That God is an intelligent being, every person will admit who believes that there is a God. Even the Heathens believed that the gods were witnesses of the actions of men, and acquainted with the events which take place upon the earth. Their prayers, and other religious services, proceeded on the supposition that they were heard by the objects of their religious worship; and their belief in prophets, who, as they imagined, foretold future events, and in oracles, which they consulted in matters of difficulty, implied their confidence in the gods, that they knew all things, and that events were subject to their control.

That God is an intelligent being, is evident from his being all-perfect—possessing every possible perfection. If God is, as we well know, eternal, omnipotent, immutable, holy, just,

and good, we conclude that he must be intelligent, otherwise he would not be an all-perfect Being, possessed of every possible perfection, because there would be still one wanting; namely, intelligence.

Again: The intelligence of the Supreme Being may be inferred from its existence among creatures. That there is intelligence among his creatures, we know from consciousness and observation; hence it follows, as a just conclusion, if there is intelligence among creatures, much more so, and in the most perfect degree, in the Creator; for it is an undeniable principle, that there cannot be more in the effect than in the cause. He that planted the ear, says the Psalmist, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall he not know?

Once more: God is omnipresent, as we have already shown; unless he were present in all places, he could not know all things. These two perfections are necessarily connected, so that the one cannot be conceived without the other. Having proved that God is an intelligent being, I proceed to consider the objects and extent of his knowledge.

First, God knows himself—he knows his own essence; he knows his own perfections, and the harmony of them; he knows his own counsels and plans; he knows, in a word, all the mysteries of his nature, which are far beyond the limits of human reason to comprehend, and at which reason stands amazed and confounded.

Secondly, God knows all beings besides himself—all things which have been, which are past; although no memorial of them may remain, they are still present to him, as if they continued to exist. We do not ascribe memory to God, because it is a faculty of mutable beings. And as there is no distinction of past, present, and to come, in his duration; so there may be no distinction of the same kind in his knowledge; he sees and knows *all* things by a glance; and, indeed, without the knowledge of the past, how could he act as the august and awful Judge of the human race at the close of time, when Adam and all his descendants will appear before him to

receive their award? The justice of the sentence will depend upon his accurate acquaintance with their character and actions.

God knows all things which now exist—all things that now are; he knows the number of the stars, and calls them by their names; he is acquainted with every individual of mankind, even the most obscure and unnoticed; he observes the minutest and most insignificant animals. Luke, xii. 6. Even the hairs of our head are numbered; and not a sparrow can fall to the ground without the knowledge of our heavenly Father. He knows all the actions of men; for the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. Prov. xv. 3. He knows the hearts of men. Jer. xvii. 9, 10.

God knows all things to come, as is evident from the predictions of Scripture, and the fulfilment of prophecy.

God knows all possible things; not only what he has done, and has purposed to do, but all that his wisdom could have accomplished.

The knowledge of God is distinguished by scholastic divines into two kinds: namely, *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ*, and *scientia visionis*. *Scientia visionis* has for its object all things past, present, and to come. *Scientia simplicis intelligentiæ* has for its object possible things—things which might have been done, but never will be done: for instance, God could have called into existence many other worlds, and many other orders of creatures. He could have arranged systems totally different from any which he has made; governed them by different laws, and peopled them with inhabitants of different natures and faculties. He could have made our own world different from what it is, and replenished it with a race of holy beings, who should never have yielded to temptation.

A third kind of knowledge has been ascribed to God, and called *scientia media*. It is the knowledge of what will happen in certain given circumstances; the knowledge of what creatures will do, if endowed with certain qualities, and placed in certain situations. For instance, God knew that the men of Keilah would deliver up David to Saul, because he knew

the state of their hearts, and the influence which the authority and solicitations of that monarch would have upon their conduct. Some think that this kind of knowledge is unworthy of God, as it makes him dependent upon creatures for a part of his knowledge. In opposition to this kind of knowledge, we assert that the knowledge of God is independent: that is, it is not obtained through the medium of his creatures, but as it respects future things, is founded on his own will. He does not know that such things will happen, if such other things precede them; but the whole series of events was planned by his infinite understanding—the ends as well as the means; and he foresees the ends, not through the medium of the means, but through the medium of his own decree, in which they have a certain future existence.

In the next place, the knowledge of God is eternal; if not eternal, much of his knowledge would be acquired in time, and it would be daily receiving accessions like our own, which would be unworthy of God. The doctrine of temporal decrees, of decrees made in time, as his intelligent creatures show themselves worthy or unworthy, sets limits to the divine understanding, and represents the Almighty like man, fickle and mutable, who is of one mind to day, and of another to-morrow.

In the third place, the knowledge of God is intuitive. In some cases human knowledge is intuitive; some things are perceived without any process of reasoning to discover them; however, the general character of human knowledge is, that it is successive; but the infinite understanding of God receives no accession of ideas. He comprehends the whole system of things, as the human eye surveys at a glance the whole visible horizon.

Hence, it will appear that the knowledge of God is infallible. There is, and can be, no mistake, no uncertainty, nothing like conjecture with him, but every thing falls out exactly according to his foreknowledge and predetermination. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! for who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?" Rom. xi. 33, 34.

I proceed to consider the wisdom of God. The wisdom of God is that attribute of his divine nature, by which he chooses the best end in the use of the best means. There is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. A man may have knowledge without wisdom, but he cannot have wisdom without knowledge. Knowledge resides in the understanding; but wisdom relates to practice. In an all-perfect Being they are necessarily conjoined. Paul puts them together, when he exclaims, "O, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." Rom. xi. 33.

In speaking of the wisdom of God, it is natural in the first place to refer to the works of God, which our eyes behold; and in contemplating their nature and design, we shall be constrained to say, "in wisdom hast thou made them all." If we look up to the starry heaven, and view the arrangement of the system to which we belong; we may observe a wonderful display of divine wisdom. The sun, placed in the centre as the great source of heat and light, dispenses without intermission his influences to the planets, which perform their revolutions around him. He is at rest, but the planets are in motion; they are kept in their orbits by his attractive power; and the mighty machine is incessantly working without confusion, or the slightest derangement of its parts. By the diurnal motion of the earth around its own axis, the different parts of its surface are successively presented to the sun, and the vicissitude of day and night is produced, so necessary to the existence and well-being of animals and vegetables. By the annual circuit of the earth, we enjoy the change of seasons on which vegetation and the life of all terrestrial animals depend. In winter, the frost destroys noxious insects and weeds, braces the human body, and prepares the soil for a new crop. The returning spring renews the face of the earth, and inspires the heart of man with cheerfulness and pleasure. "The warmth of summer ripens the succeeding productions of the garden and the field; and autumn crowns the year with fruit and corn, to reward the care and toil of the husbandman. The succession of night and day is pleasant and useful to man; the day

he welcomes as the proper season of labour; and the night is no less welcome as the season of rest."

The relative situation of the earth to the sun, is an additional proof of the wisdom of God. Had it been placed nearer, or moved to a greater distance from the earth, excessive heat or excessive cold would have proved equally fatal to animal and vegetable life. All living beings on this our globe must have perished, unless they had received another constitution, and the water in the ocean, the lakes and rivers, would have been either evaporated or frozen. Behold then the wisdom of God!

If we descend to the earth, and consider its constitution, we shall perceive, that by the same wisdom it is fitted for all the purposes for which it was intended. The earth is composed of various substances, adapted to a variety of uses. Let me call your attention to the nature of the substances on its surface. Had the earth been covered with rocks or sand, it would have been unfit for the habitation of man; because it could not have afforded the means of subsistence.

As the ocean is the inexhaustible source of those exhalations which descend upon us in rain and dew, and by which the rivers and springs are supplied, the herbs, and plants, and trees nourished, it is evident, that if the boundaries of the ocean had been compressed, all nature would have languished — animals and vegetables would have perished, and our globe would have been converted into a dreary wilderness.

Again, let us observe the living creatures which inhabit the earth, and we shall perceive many proofs of Divine Wisdom, in the formation of their bodies, and particularly our own, which, according to a sacred writer, is "fearfully and wonderfully made."

The bones of the human frame are so firm, that they support the whole body, yet so flexible, that we can perform a vast variety of motions. The muscles, which are more than four hundred in number, have all their particular uses, yet never interfere with each other. The eye is an organ of astonishing contrivance—astonishing, that a body so small should perceive

not only near, but distant objects ; should bring under our view the earth and the heavens ; should make us acquainted with the figure, size, colour, and relative position of so many bodies ; should discern the members of a minute insect, and contemplate the host of stars marshalled in the sky. Surely, that such a small organ should be capable of taking so wide a range, and performing so many wonders, is a proof that it is not the work of chance, but of that Being who is possessed of infinite wisdom. The ear is no less wonderfully adapted to its office ; its mechanism is extremely simple ; but the variety of its effects is remarkably great. The process of digestion is surprising ; the power of the stomach, and other organs, to turn so many different substances into chyle and blood, and thus to nourish life for many years, is truly amazing. The heart has the power of forcing the blood into the arteries, and receiving it back from the veins, after it has visited the most distant and minute parts of the system ; for this purpose it contracts and dilates its muscles four thousand times in every hour, making one hundred thousand strokes every twenty-four hours ; and, continuing to do this for seventy or eighty years together.

The bodies of animals no less display the wisdom of God. Some are formed to live in the water, an element that would destroy others. Birds are furnished with wings, to soar aloft in the air ; some animals live beneath the surface of the ground ; but they all have organs suited to their destination ; proper food is provided for their support, and they have sagacity to find it, and stomachs fitted to digest it. All this proceedeth from Him who is excellent in counsel, and wonderful in working.

In the second place, the wisdom of God is displayed in his providence ; by which we mean his natural and moral government of the world. His providence is employed in upholding the natural system, and the living creatures void of reason, by the continual exercise of the power that brought them into existence. I shall, however, confine your attention to his government of men, considered as moral agents.

First, I observe that God manifests his wisdom in the order which he preserves among them. Men, if left to themselves,

would throw all things into confusion and disorder. The human mind, as it now is, contains all the elements of discord; men are self-willed and rebellious, actuated by their impetuous passions, proud, envious, revengeful, ambitious, and so inordinately governed by self-interest, as to be ready to sacrifice the welfare of others to their views of honour, wealth and pleasure; and hence the nature of man has a tendency to produce discord, confusion and misery.

God, in his moral government over men, prevents or moderates these operations. And how does he effect this? Not by simple power — by suspending the free agency of men; but by means suitable to their nature; by the precepts of the moral law; by the dictates of conscience; by the influence of civil society, and by opposing one passion to another; and so counter-acting or weakening its effect. The revengeful man he withholds from his purpose by the fear of evil to himself — the sensualist from the apprehension of the loss of character or health; and sometimes the passions of one man are opposed to those of another, so that both are impeded, and neither can accomplish his design, at least to the extent which he meditated. Thus he quiets the tumults of the people without a miracle, or visible interposition. Men retain their liberty, and yet are unconsciously restrained from doing evil; and although there is much irregularity in the world, and occasionally dreadful disorders occur, yet the effects are mitigated, and such a degree of order is maintained as is necessary to preserve the human species, and the final development of the divine counsels.

In the second place, the wisdom of God appears in those remarkable events that are calculated to preserve alive a sense of his existence and government. Such are the circumstances which sometimes accompany the rise, and particularly the fall of kingdoms and empires; to which may be added earthquakes, pestilence, and desolating tempests; which, for a time at least, make religious impressions upon the minds of most men; wonderful escapes from danger; favours unexpectedly and strangely conferred, and judgments executed suddenly and visibly upon notorious offenders.

Remarkable events of this kind, though they are not miraculous, and might often be accounted for from natural causes, have, nevertheless, a tendency to lead the mind to an invisible agent, to whose will all the parts of nature are subordinate; and, as a sense of a superintending Providence is necessary to uphold the laws and institutions of society, and to preserve order and peace, the advantages of such dispensations, even to the temporal interests of mankind, are obvious: they lead the mind to the belief of a higher power, who is friendly to justice and humanity, and who is the avenger of crimes, and at the same time display the wisdom of God in the rare occurrence of such interpositions.

In the third place, the wisdom of God is apparent in the manner of conducting his designs. Sometimes his purposes are accomplished by bringing good out of evil, as was the case with Joseph. Joseph was sold for a slave, and afterwards committed to prison under false accusation, that he might rise to the highest honours of Egypt, and thus be the means of preserving his father and his family from destruction. Sometimes by making use of persons who have no knowledge of his designs, and aim at a very different purpose; thus, the king of Babylon was the rod in the hand of God with which he chastised his rebellious people Israel, though it was the object of the king to satisfy his pride and avarice by conquest and spoil. Sometimes those who are opposed to his designs, and do all in their power to oppose and defeat them, are employed as the ministers of his will to fulfil them, as was the case with the Jews, in the death and crucifixion of Christ. Sometimes, when apparently his designs seem to be on the point of failure, they are on the very eve of accomplishment; so that in their result they may be seen to be the work of God. The family of David had long been stripped of its ancient splendour and royalty, and the royal line had sunk into obscurity, and was almost forgotten, when Christ was born, and elevated to the throne of the universe, whose kingdom shall endure for ever.

Lastly, the wisdom of God appears in the promiscuous distribution of good and evil. God is a just and righteous being,

and will therefore give unto every one according to his deeds ; but as justice is not fully displayed in the dispensation of things in this life, it reminds us, that while the present administration is adapted to the design of God respecting us in this world, there is another world to come, where, on the great judgment day, he will rectify all apparent disorders and inequality in the distribution of good and evil in this world. In this the wisdom of God appears, inasmuch as the belief of this doctrine has a tendency to support the authority of religion, and excite us to pursue such conduct as becomes accountable beings.

Let us, in the fourth place, attend to the display of the wisdom of God in the redemption of man. The ends which God had in view in this glorious work of redemption, were : to glorify his own perfections, to establish the authority of the law, and to raise our fallen race from misery to happiness. To effect these purposes, the substitution of a righteous person was necessary, who should bear the punishment of the guilty, and render the exercise of mercy to them perfectly consistent with justice. But where could a person be found, at once willing and qualified to interpose between heaven and earth, and to reconcile guilty man with his offended Maker ? As men were all involved in the same condemnation, none could assist his brethren ; neither was it in the power of the most exalted seraph before the throne of God ; because angels cannot die, nor would the sufferings of one of them have been admitted as an equivalent for those of the millions of the redeemed. Here then we behold a wonderful display of wisdom in providing a substitute, a man to die for men, a man derived from the same root, yet perfectly holy. Such a man is Jesus Christ ; allied to us by his participation of our common nature, yet superior to us by the possession of his divine nature, born without spot of a virgin, and at the same time the Son of God. He, the Son of God, condescended, and took upon himself the nature of man ; he endured innumerable sufferings in soul and body, and at last expired on the cross as a sacrifice for sin. Thus, He, by his active and passive obedience, satisfied the demands of the law, removed its penalty, exhibited to the

universe that God is holy and just; but at the same time abundant in mercy and goodness, he raised mankind from the depth of woe and misery, to the height of glory and happiness. Another proof of the wisdom of God in redemption, to which I shall briefly advert, as it will occur again in speaking of the power of God, is the manner in which, and the instrument by which it was made known and published to the world. In the meantime let us confide in the wisdom of God, and not in the counsels of men; let us cast all our anxious cares upon him; let us commit our way to the Lord, and he will guide us by his counsel, and afterward receive us to his glory.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE HOLINESS AND JUSTICE OF GOD.

THE holiness of God is that perfection of his divine nature, by which he is infinitely averse to all moral evil, and loves all that is good and right. Holiness is essential to God, and is evident from the positive and repeated testimony of the sacred writers. The great God himself asserts his own character, and proclaims his own name: "I, the Lord your God, am holy." "I am the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour." "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Isaiah in a vision saw Jehovah sitting upon a throne, surrounded by the seraphim, "one of whom cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

The holiness of God is manifested in all his works and dispensations; and is evident from the original state of all rational and immortal beings. They were all created holy. The innumerable host of angels were created pure; those who still retained their first estate are called holy angels, and those who fell were originally holy. As it respects man, God created him in the beginning holy, and after his own image, in righteousness and true holiness. Though he permitted man to fall, this

is no impeachment of his holiness; man might have withstood the temptation to sin; his moral ability was sufficient for the purpose. He might be tempted, but there was no principle within him which could co-operate with temptation, and facilitate its success; his Maker did not abandon him when he was actually exposed to temptation; but upheld those powers which were adequate to resist temptation, and by the proper exercise of which he would have been able to overcome.

To maintain that his power was not sufficient to his circumstances; or, that it was withdrawn or impaired, would be to make God the author of sin. He yielded to temptation, not because he was in want of power to withstand, but because he attended to the temptation alone, and disregarded the consequences, which would have counteracted its influence.

Let us consider the nature and design of the law originally given to man in his primitive state, and we shall be furnished with an additional manifestation of his holiness. The design of the law was to retain man in a state of purity and innocence, and to induce him to obedience; it was sanctioned by promises and threatenings; thus, while it taught him his duty, it actuated him to obedience, by the prospects of reward, and opposed the temptation which might assail him, by the fear of punishment. In placing man originally under a law, strengthened by promises and threatenings, we see a proof both of God's care of him, and his regard to holiness. What could have been a stronger inducement to obedience than the hope of everlasting happiness for himself and his posterity? What a more powerful guard against sin, than the certain and eternal ruin of himself and his race?

The holiness of God appears not only in the general design of the law, but also in the nature of its precepts. The precepts of the law are all holy, and tend to promote holiness in heart and life; they extend not only to the external acts, but they reach the secrets of the heart, and condemn every evil desire and inclination, every inordinate lust, that wars against the soul. The law is holy. Rom. vii. 12. The dispensations of God in which his justice has been revealed in the punish-

ment of the transgressors of his law, are also manifestations of his holiness, and his utter abhorrence of sin. When the angels in heaven rebelled against him, they were cast down to hell, and delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment. When our primitive parents disobeyed in transgressing the law, they were expelled from Paradise. When the antediluvian world sinned against God, he overwhelmed them with the waters of the deluge; upon Sodom and Gomorrah, he rained down fire and brimstone; and when the Israelites, his chosen people, indulged in vice, or forsook the worship of God, he delivered them into the hands of their enemies, of the Philistines, or the Assyrians; and at one time consigned them to seventy years captivity in Babylon, and at length, after they rejected and crucified the Lord of glory, and the measure of their iniquity had become full, he brought upon them the fury of the Romans; burnt their temple, destroyed their city, and dispersed them among all the nations of the earth, as monuments of his displeasure. Truly, God is a holy Being, and a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity.

The holiness of God shines with peculiar lustre in redemption. We must go to Gethsemane, we must visit Calvary, if we would at once behold the most awful, and the most engaging display of the divine holiness. Why did Christ the Son of God condescend to assume our nature, yet without sin? Why did he agonize in the garden, and exclaim, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." Why did he suffer such unparalleled sufferings on the cross, which made him cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Was it not to expose the odiousness of sin—to exhibit to the universe that God is holy, and to make atonement for sin? Was it not to restore man to that state of purity from which he had fallen? In the sufferings and death of Christ, we behold at once the most convincing and powerful display, that Jehovah is a holy Being, and of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Here "mercy and truth meet each other." Mercy to the misery of sinners, and truth to the purity of the law.

The holiness of God appears in the sanctifying work of the

Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers, and in all the means appointed for that purpose; and lastly, it is a proof of God's holiness that he has made purity of heart an indispensable qualification for eternal happiness. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

The justice of God is the perfect rectitude of his nature, whereby he is infinitely righteous and equal, both in himself and in all his dealings with his creatures. God is just to himself in doing all things agreeable to his nature and perfections, and as becoming a pure and holy Being. He cannot do anything that is contrary to the perfection of his nature; he cannot lie, or deny himself. He is just in maintaining his own glory, for he will not give his glory to another; he is just towards his creatures, particularly with man.

The justice of God has been distinguished into absolute and relative. By absolute justice, is understood the rectitude of his nature, which leads him on all occasions to do what is right and equal. Some say that God, by his absolute justice and dominion, could inflict the greatest torments, even those of hell, on the most innocent creatures. But if so, what idea can they who thus affirm maintain of justice, which could treat the innocent in the same manner as the guilty? If this is justice, what then is injustice? How does it differ from the other? Those who maintain that God may subject an innocent creature to the greatest sufferings, are chargeable with transmuting rectitude into mere power. God might do anything, because he is omnipotent; but there are other perfections of his nature by which the exercise of power is limited. The wisdom and goodness of God lead us to believe that he will not make any of his creatures miserable without a cause, or inflict everlasting sufferings upon an innocent creature; because this would lead us to infer that righteousness was not more pleasing to him than unrighteousness, and that the punishment of the guilty was rather an effect of arbitrary will than of justice.

Relative justice respects God in the character of a moral governor, who will render to his subjects according to their

deserts. It may be distinguished, as among men, into commutative and distributive. Commutative justice takes place in the exchange of one thing for another—in giving and receiving an equivalent. It is observed in all human transactions, and ought to regulate all contracts and agreements between man and man; it cannot, however, be ascribed to God, who can receive no equivalent for anything which he bestows upon his creatures—all that they possess belong to God. “Who hath first given him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again.” Rom. xi. 35.

Distributive justice consists in bestowing rewards, and inflicting punishments, according to an established rule. A question may be asked here, whether avenging justice, justice exercised in taking vengeance upon sinners, or punishing them for their transgressions, is essential to God; that is, whether the punishment of sin flows from the purity and rectitude of his nature, or is an effect of his will. Some have maintained that God could have pardoned sin without an atonement. Let us hear what the Scripture saith on this subject: “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity.” “Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with thee. Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity.” “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord.” “Our God is a consuming fire.” Hab. i. 13; Ps. v. 4, 5; Prov. xvii. 15; Heb. xii. 29.

What do these passages imply? Merely that God has formed a resolution to punish sin, while he might have pardoned it, cannot be the meaning; but the obvious inference from them is, that sin is opposed to his nature—that he cannot be reconciled to sinners, as such; that he is led to punish them, not by the same necessity by which fire consumes combustibles, but by a moral necessity, as natural and irresistible. If sin is a violation of the law, if there is intrinsic demerit in sin, it is consistent with justice to punish it. To suppose that it might not be punished, that God, if it seemed good to him, might have suffered sin to go unpunished, is to suppose that he might

have done what is not consistent with justice, and the world, according to this hypothesis, might have been redeemed without the blood of Christ; but God, in his infinite wisdom, judged that it would be better to make Christ a sacrifice for sin, and his sacrifice the means to answer the designs of his moral government more fully; and that in this way a more impressive lesson, and effectual warning, would be given to check the perverseness of mankind, and to inspire them with reverence for his law. It is true, men may forgive one another's offences without satisfaction; but it does not thence follow, that God may pardon sins without it; for what have the laws of men to do with the laws of God. We may forgive offences without wrong to ourselves, or to the public; without wrong to ourselves, if we are satisfied, and no other person is injured; without wrong to the public, provided the public interest is not affected thereby. It does not belong to us to avenge ourselves. Vengeance is mine—I will repay, saith the Lord. Rom. xii. 19. That he has taken it out of our hands, implies that he is, in the exercise of his power, the moral Governor of the world; we ought, therefore, not to compare the manner of his procedure with that of a private individual. Would it be just in a magistrate, in a civil ruler, with whom we may compare him, to permit crimes to go unpunished?

The justice of God implies the three following particulars:—First, the giving of righteous laws to men, suitable to our nature and that relation we stand in to Him as our creator, preserver, and benefactor; secondly, the enforcing of his laws with proper sanctions; and thirdly, in the impartial execution of them. Some have objected against the righteousness of the law, that its demands are too high for the present infirm state of our nature; but we must consider that this disproportion did not exist in the beginning—in that case there might be just cause of complaint; but that it has been superinduced by a cause, for which the Author of the law is not responsible. Had the law not been adapted to our nature—had man wanted power to fulfil the law, then there would have been no justice in subjecting him to it; and to have punished him for the vio-

lation of the law, would have been cruel; but since man has lost the power by his own voluntary act, and it was not forcibly taken from him, the loss of that power does not invalidate the claims of the Lawgiver.

It may seem to be an objection against the justice of the Divine government, that good and evil are in many cases distributed according to no fixed rule, and that often the good falls to the lot of the wicked, and the evil to the lot of the righteous. As I shall have an opportunity of referring to this subject again, in a succeeding chapter, at present I need only observe that it is founded on the false supposition that the ends of the Divine government are accomplished in this world.

The operations of conscience, in general, among all the children of men, bear testimony to the justice of God. Why is it that every man feels pleasure when he has performed a good action, and pain when he has committed a bad one? does it not proceed from the assumption that there is a law, holy, just, and good; and that, as we are accountable for our actions, we shall be judged according to the law? These operations are general, and felt by all men, even the Heathens, who, being without revelation, are a law to themselves, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts accusing, or else excusing one another. Rom. ii. 15.

Under the influence of this principle, they understood certain events to be instances of retributive justice, and remarked the punishment of individuals in the calamities that befell them. Their histories abound in facts, which were construed to be Divine judgments; interpositions of the gods to avenge themselves upon those who were guilty of fraud, murder, and impiety.

The institution of sacrifices, was expressive of a conviction that crimes were offensive to the gods, and that justice demanded satisfaction. The notions they held of a future state, and of judges before whom departed spirits appeared, to have a place assigned to them according to their deeds in Elysium, or in Tartarus, derived their authority from conscience, which reminded them that justice presided over the

affairs of men, and that if men were not punished in this world for their crimes, they would be in the next.

The dispensations of Providence in the punishment of the transgressors of the law, is another proof of Divine justice. The sacred Scriptures record many examples of the justice of God in the punishment of sinners. I may again, as in the preceding chapter, in speaking of the holiness of God, refer you to the Deluge, to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, to the judgments that befell the Jewish nation, and to many other instances of Divine justice, in the punishment of transgressors; but we shall pass on to the most powerful argument for the justice of God; I mean,

The sufferings and death of Christ. It will be generally acknowledged that Christ was innocent and holy; now, it is a maxim, supported both by reason and the Holy Scriptures, that guilt precedes suffering, and is the cause of it; and that God, as a benevolent Being, will not subject arbitrarily an innocent creature to pain and suffering; as Christ, who was perfectly obedient, innocent, and holy, suffered in soul and body throughout the whole of his life, especially at the close of it, there must have been some reason or cause of his sufferings; he must have been somehow connected with the guilty, so as to suffer on their account, and such we are informed was the fact: "He suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Some indeed object, and reject the idea of substitution, as at variance with this first principle of justice, that every man should stand or fall for himself. This objection, however, is not supported by the general sense of mankind, among whom suretiship is held to be justifiable in certain cases, and upon certain conditions, and is frequently admitted. Though both the laws of God and men require that every one shall be personally responsible for his own conduct, yet it has been judged expedient occasionally to relax the rigour of the law, and to allow the obligation to be transferred to another, with his consent. It should therefore be remembered, that as Christ was complete master of his own life, and he might dispose of it at his pleasure, there can be no doubt that the Law-

giver might accept it instead of the forfeited lives of transgressors. If, by the sacrifice of Christ, who was innocent, and to whom no injury was done, because he suffered voluntarily, God's hatred of sin would be manifest, the odiousness of sin exposed, and the authority of the law and the government of God maintained, the ends of justice would be gained. If it be admitted that the substitution of Christ be consistent with justice, it is evident that this expedient has served to give a full and awful display of divine justice.

Finally, the justice of God will be openly manifested at the end of time, when God will judge the world in righteousness, and render unto every one according to the deeds done in the body. The result of which will be a universal conviction that all is right; a conviction in the mind of every man with regard to himself and to others. None, not even the guilty, will dare to accuse the justice of their doom; but they will be compelled to acknowledge its righteousness, and that their eternal sufferings are the just reward of their sins and disobedience.

CHAPTER XX.

THE POWER AND GOODNESS OF GOD.

THE power of God is his ability to do every thing which may be done; every thing which is consistent with the other perfections of his nature. Before I proceed to lay before you the evidences of this perfection, which are afforded by his works, I shall briefly take notice of some things which may seem inconsistent with infinite power. God cannot lie, or deny himself; 2 Tim. ii. 13: Tit. ii. 2; for this would be contrary to his truth and faithfulness. He cannot do any thing contrary to his honour and glory; for instance: he cannot raise a creature to such dignity as to have divine perfections ascribed to it, or to have religious worship and adoration given to it, which

would be denying himself, and detracting from his own glory, and giving to the creature the service and worship due to himself alone.

He cannot do any thing that implies a contradiction, as to make a thing to be and not to be at the same time ; to make a part greater than the whole ; to make what is past, present, or what is present, future ; these things are beyond the reach of power. The reason that God cannot work contradictions, is, not that he is deficient in power, and consequently could work them if his power were greater, but that the things are in themselves, in their own nature, impossible. As that the eye cannot see what is invisible, and the ear hear what is not audible, is no impeachment of their perfection, so it implies no imperfection in the power of God, that he cannot do what cannot be done.

And once more, it would be no objection to the power of God, that we, according to our limited view and knowledge of things, discover imperfections in some of his works. If apparently some parts of God's works were not executed with the same consummate skill as others, this is not owing to the want of power, but proceeds from design. Decay and death, among the works of God, might lead us to infer that, from their frail and transitory nature, their Maker must have wanted power to make them permanent ; but here again we may observe, that decay and death are not owing to weakness, but to design and permission. Likewise, the introduction of moral evil into the world is owing, not to the want of power to prevent it, but to the abuse of man's free agency. There can be no doubt that he foresaw and permitted it ; but since he was pleased to make man a free agent, the possibility of the abuse of his freedom was the necessary consequence ; a creature capable of acting in different ways might do wrong. God might have prevented moral evil, if he had made man a different creature, by giving him a different constitution, or withholding his liberty, or by controlling the exercise of it in such a manner as not to take it away. But he chose to make him free, and to leave him to act as his own mind should direct him. Moral

evil is therefore not the result of the want of power in the Supreme Being to prevent it.

The evidences of the power of God are the following:—In the first place, the power of God is gloriously manifested in the work of creation. Creation may be defined the production of existence, where nothing was before. The act of creation exceeds all finite comprehension, because it is totally different from the effect which our own power, or that of other creatures, can accomplish. In working, we must have a subject upon which to operate, and be furnished with materials for our work; but God created all things out of nothing. It is true, it is beyond our comprehension to conceive how something can be brought out of nothing; still it is not impossible, and implies no contradiction. No man is able to prove that it is impossible; all that he can say is, that it is inconceivable to him; all our difficulties, however, vanish, when we consider that the power we are speaking of is infinite. In the language of an inspired writer, “God spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.” Ps. xxxiii. 9.

Some of the ancient philosophers maintained the eternity of matter, and the production of all things by chance. But as absolute eternity implies necessary and immutable existence, it is absurd to attribute it to a substance inert, passive, divisible, and subject to perpetual change, as matter is. As matter now exists, as it could not have existed from all eternity, or been the production of mere chance, we must admit that it was created, or that God in the beginning exerted his almighty power in making all things out of nothing, and that without labour, by a mere act of volition.

By his creating energy, he brought all things into existence, whether the things created were great or small; he created the earth which we inhabit, with all things therein, whether they be animate or inanimate; he created the sun, which is a million times larger, with the planets which revolve around it as their centre; the countless multitude of stars, at an inconceivable distance from us, which probably give light to other worlds; still more numerous. Astronomers tell us that

there may be luminous bodies so remote, that their light, notwithstanding the astonishing velocity with which it moves, has not yet reached us; and bodies of such magnitude, that the sun, in comparison of them, dwindles into a point. When we consider all this, and that there was a time when space, which this wonderful array fills and adorns, was a mighty void, the abode of darkness and silence, and that in a moment all arose at the voice of God, what a sublime and exalted idea does it give us of the power of God in creation!

Let us, in the next place, attend to the power of God displayed in the preservation and government of all things. As all things depend for their existence upon God, so it is prolonged and continued in existence by the same power that created it. Some seem to speak as if, having been once made, they had the ground or reason of their being in themselves, and that their continued existence was independent of the immediate interference of their Creator. They say the works of man do not fall together when the hand of the artist is withdrawn; but let it be remembered, the works of man are not dependent upon him for their existence, but for their form; the materials of which they subsist, and even the order in which they are arranged, is maintained by the laws of nature. If the motions of such of them as do move, go on without his interference, it is not by the power which he has communicated to them; but in consequence of some previous contrivance to make some of those laws to act upon them. All the honour which man can claim from his works, is arrangement.

Their preservation and movements are traced to the same power which upholds the earth, and guides its course. It is both agreeable to reason, and confirmed by Scripture, that without the unceasing agency of the Creator, the universe would return to nothing. "In Him we live, move, and have our being." Acts, xvii. 28. How great must be the power of Him who upholds and preserves all things—who holds together the innumerable atoms which compose the innumerable material forms found in the universe; the plants and trees, the hills and mountains, the rivers and oceans; who at one and the

same moment works in every vegetable and animal system in this great world; who upholds, quickens, and invigorates every mind at the same moment; also acts in the same efficacious manner in every part of the solar system, and of all other systems which compose the universe! What must be the power of Him, who sends abroad every moment immense oceans of light from the sun, and from the stars; who holds all worlds in the hollow of his hand, retains them in their places, and rolls them through boundless space with unceasing, most rapid and perfectly harmonious motions, without the least disturbance, error, or imperfection!

The moral government of God is still more wonderful. To his power in restraining evil spirits and wicked men, we owe much of our safety and comfort. Bad as the world is, it would be infinitely worse, if God did not withhold bad men from their purposes. He that restrains the ravings of the sea, subdues also the madness of the people. "Surely, the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath wilt thou restrain." Ps. lxxvi. 10.

The power of God has been displayed in the work of redemption; in the conception of our Saviour, whose mother was a virgin; in the miracles which he performed, and in his resurrection from the dead. The power of God was manifested in supporting the human nature of Christ, in his unparalleled sufferings, both of his body and mind, and in making him victorious over all the powers of darkness.

The power of God is displayed in the conversion of sinners. Hence, the conversion of sinners is called in Scripture a creation, and a resurrection from the dead; and God is said to fulfil in them all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.

To conclude, the power of God is manifested in the propagation of the Gospel. If we consider the instruments by which it was propagated, the obstacles it had to encounter both from Jews and Gentiles, and its astonishing success in overcoming every difficulty and impediment, we must acknowledge that it was owing to the power of God accompanying

the first preachers of the Gospel. The apostles went forth in the name of their Lord and Master, filled with his love, inspired by his spirit, animated by his promise; and the weapons of their warfare, altogether spiritual, became "mighty through God, to destroy the strongest holds of Satan;" even in Jerusalem, where Christ was crucified, many thousands were converted to him. In Cæsarea, in Antioch, in Corinth, in Ephesus, in Alexandria, and even in Rome, Christian churches were formed; the altars of the idols were abandoned, and the Gospel triumphed over millions of souls!

The goodness of God is that attribute of his divine nature, which disposes him to communicate happiness to his creatures, so far as is consistent with his other perfections. It is generally distinguished into absolute and relative. By absolute goodness is meant that essential property of his nature which he had in himself from eternity, before any creatures were formed, and without any regard to creatures. His relative goodness is that perfection exercised towards his creatures, to do them good, and make them happy.

The goodness of God is displayed in creation. There is no perfection of the Divine nature so eminently visible in the whole creation, as his goodness; it shines forth with peculiar lustre. All the variety of innumerable living creatures which he made capable of receiving his goodness in a variety of ways, according to the distinct capacities of their several natures, testify that God is good. Hence, heaven and earth, the sea, and all things therein, the sun, the moon, and the stars, all animate and inanimate beings proclaim aloud, that "God is good, and that his tender mercies are over all his works."

The goodness of God is manifested especially in the creation of man. God created man in the beginning in his own image, and after his own likeness. His body he created fearfully and wonderfully, and his soul he endowed with noble faculties, by which he is not only distinguished from the brute creation, but capable of knowing, loving, and enjoying God, his Creator and Benefactor. The original state of man was a state of happiness; peace and joy reigned in his breast, and Paradise, in

which he was placed, was a place of beauty, melody, and delight.

Again, the goodness of God appeared in giving him so good and holy a law, and promising to reward his obedience with everlasting felicity. Obedience, indeed, was a debt which he owed to his Creator, so that, although he had fulfilled the whole law, he would have done only what he was in duty bound to do, and should have had no claim to a remuneration. This transaction, therefore, displayed great condescension, and also great benevolence, a regard to the happiness of man, which it would probably have augmented, and rendered immutably secure; for after the term of trial was past, the Divine faithfulness and justice would have been pledged for its perpetual duration.

The goodness of God is apparent in his kind providence, which extends to all created beings. He who first made man still upholds all things. His providence extends to all his creatures; even the inferior are the objects of his care: "The young lions roar, and seek their meat from God." All animals "wait upon him, that he may give them their meat in due season; that which he giveth them, they gather; he openeth his hand, and they are filled with good." In a word, "the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." But the goodness of God towards man, in the ample provision he has made for his sustenance and comfort, is truly great and astonishing. Heaven and earth, the sea, and all things therein, the sun, the moon, and the stars, the seasons of the year, rain and sunshine, thunder and lightning, storms and tempests, proclaim the goodness of God. All the blessings we enjoy, health and prosperity, food and raiment, defence against innumerable evils, and support under afflictions, are all the effects of his bounty; and what is still more striking and impressive is, that the objects of his goodness are sinful creatures, who never suffer a single day to pass without offending their Benefactor. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Matt. v. 45.

But how, it may be asked, is the existence of evil in creation

consistent with the goodness of God? To say that it proceeds from a malignant being who is continually employed in counteracting the good, is not worthy of our notice. To maintain that some of these are not evils, that upon the whole they are conducive to good, is not a satisfactory answer; because it is opposed to facts and our experience. To assert that evil is the effect of general laws, is to throw a reflection upon the wisdom and power of the Creator, as if he could not have established a system of laws which would not have thwarted and crossed one another. If evil was unavoidable, God is not omnipotent; if it might have been avoided, it is not enough to say that it is conducive to good. The question still may be asked, how its admission is reconcilable with the idea of perfect benevolence. The most reasonable way of solving this difficulty, is to acknowledge that these are real evils, however, not inconsistent with the benevolence of the Author of Nature, because the world in which they are found is inhabited by sinful beings. Had man continued in his original state, these evils would have been unaccountable; but no person who believes that God is just, can wonder that suffering should be the attendant of guilt. Although there is much evil in creation, yet there can be no doubt that the balance of physical good preponderates. Man, even in his fallen state, is an object of the goodness of his Maker.

The world in which we live is, on the whole, a happy world, although it is a world of sinners. God displays before our eyes, daily, the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering. But if physical evil is the consequence of moral evil, whence comes moral evil? Moral evil is, as we learned in the preceding chapter, the consequence of the abuse of moral liberty. But was it consistent with goodness, to create free agents who would abuse their liberty, and make themselves miserable? We answer in the affirmative; because God has actually created them. If they have used the power he gave them for evil, and not for good, they are responsible for the consequences, and no blame can be imputed to their Creator. But as God foresaw that man would abuse his

liberty, and make himself miserable, would it not have been suitable to the character of a benevolent Being to have prevented it? In answer to this question, I will not maintain that God could not have prevented it, without destroying his liberty and changing his nature, for the righteous in heaven will be free, but no longer liable to sin. I think, on the whole, it is best not to attempt to explain the permission of moral evil, and to acknowledge our ignorance, rather than to give such an account of it as would be degrading to God, representing him as an arbitrary Sovereign, who has sacrificed the happiness of his creatures to his own glory; or as would impeach his justice and goodness. In the mean time, let us rejoice that his wisdom has overruled it for the best and noblest ends, the highest glory to God, and the highest happiness to man.

This leads me to make a few remarks on the goodness of God in redemption. For this purpose, consider the character of its author. Who is this? The great God of the universe, the creator and preserver of all things; he who is worshipped and adored by the host of heaven, who is all-sufficient and happy in himself, and who has no need of our services. Consider the person employed in this work of mercy. Who is it? The Son of God; his son not by creation or adoption, but the only begotten of the Father, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. Consider the manner in which he procured our redemption, his deep condescension, his sufferings and death; consider the price of our redemption, which was blood, not human blood, but the blood of the Son of God; consider the benefits flowing from his sufferings. God, says the Apostle, spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him give us all things freely? Let God be praised for his goodness.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TRUTH AND FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

IN this chapter I shall call your attention to the truth and faithfulness of God. When we call him the true God, we distinguish him not only from the false gods and idols of the nations, but likewise affirm that an undeviating regard to truth marks all his communications to mankind, and that he never deceives them. There are different ways in which God has made declarations to us.

In the first place, I observe that he is true in his declarations to us through the medium of our senses, by which we acquire the knowledge of external objects. We cannot otherwise, by the laws of our nature, but believe that objects exist without us. Yet there have been some philosophers who have maintained that matter does not exist. It is doubtful, however, whether they believed it themselves in reality. Our senses, indeed, do not make us acquainted with the internal nature of objects, but this is only an imperfection; so far as they go, they faithfully instruct us in the knowledge of the properties of things, although they leave us in ignorance of their essences. Our senses do indeed sometimes deceive us, but only when they are in a diseased state; or when they are disadvantageously situated for making observations; or when we draw conclusions too hastily. When all the requisite conditions are provided, they do not deceive us, but we always find ourselves safe and comfortable in acting according to the notices of our senses.

God is true in his communication of knowledge to us, by the medium of reason. We grant that reason is fallible, and often errs; yet if we give due attention, we shall perceive that this is owing not so much to the faculty itself as to the abuse of it. If we employ it upon subjects which lie beyond our sphere, we shall be led into the regions of uncertainty, doubt, and conjec-

ture. If we commence the investigation of truth with prejudices, and are guided by our passions, we shall go wrong; but then let us not complain that reason has misguided us.

Reason is a guide to man in all things within the sphere of his knowledge; but is not intended that he might be independent of his Maker, to whom we ought, as the source of wisdom, to look and receive with gratitude the supernatural discoveries which he has been pleased to communicate to mankind.

God is true with respect to the revelation of his will and counsel contained in the Holy Scriptures. All its doctrines, precepts, and facts are true. That the Scriptures are of divine origin, is proved by their external and internal evidences.

After we have investigated the subject, and been convinced of their divine authority, we are in duty bound to give them full credit as a revelation coming from God; to receive them with respect and submission, and fully to believe in them to the exclusion of doubts and objections.

There may be doctrines contained in Revelation which are beyond our comprehension, and difficult to conceive; but the difficulty which we feel, in assenting to such doctrines, should yield to the reflection that they proceed from him whose understanding is infinite, while ours is limited within narrow bounds; and that they relate to subjects of which we are but incompetent judges. After we have been convinced, and ascertained by external and internal proofs, that the doctrines, precepts, and facts contained in the Scripture are true, and founded upon truth, we are bound, in reason, to believe that those parts which are mysterious and incomprehensible are equally true.

God then is true in all his declarations to us, and he is faithful.

He is faithful to all his promises. The promises may be distinguished into two classes, absolute and conditional. An absolute promise is one, the performance of which is suspended on no condition; but rests solely upon the faithfulness of the promiser. The promise of a Saviour, which flowed from the love of God, independent of the conduct of man, is absolute, and was, therefore, performed at the appointed time. The pro-

promise to him of a spiritual seed is of this nature, in consequence of which promise his spirit operates effectually on the hearts of those who are by nature dead and quickened unto a new life.

Other promises are conditional. The promise of salvation is made, not to all that hear the Gospel, but to those only who repent and believe; such only become interested in the benefits of salvation. Mark xvi. 16.

There are many promises contained in the Holy Scriptures which God has faithfully fulfilled. The promise of the Messiah was made immediately after the fall, and renewed in succeeding ages, and finally accomplished in the fulness of time. Gal. ii. 4, 5.

The promise that the descendants of Abraham should be delivered out of Egyptian bondage at a certain period, was punctually observed. Ex. xii. 41; Hab. ii. 3.

The promise given to Abraham that he should have a son by Sarah, who was barren, and ninety years of age, and Abraham himself an hundred, and which seemed physically impossible, was truly wonderful, and was exactly fulfilled.

And hence we may justly conclude that all the other promises respecting the Church and individual members of it in this world, and in the next, will be performed with the same punctuality. "The promises of God are all yea, and Amen in Christ Jesus."

God is faithful in his threatenings. The threatenings may, like the promises, be distinguished into two classes. Absolute threatenings were those denounced against the rebellious Israelites, who were doomed to perish in the wilderness. A conditional threatening is found in the history of Nineveh. To the same class of threatenings belong those which are directed against sinners living under the Gospel dispensation. He that believeth not is condemned. John iii. 36.

God is sincere in his admonitions which he addresses to men. He calls, invites, and entreats them to turn unto God by repentance; to believe the revelation of his grace, and to engage in the work of their salvation, that they may obtain the pardon of their sins, and eternal life in the world to come.

Have we any reason to suspect that God is not in earnest? Why should we not give the same credit to him which we would give to a person of known veracity, who spoke to us in affectionate terms, and expressed great concern for our welfare? No man will deny that it is our duty to return to God by repentance and faith, and to engage in the work of our salvation; so it cannot be doubted God may enforce it in whatever manner his wisdom sees proper; although he knows that we will not comply, because his right to command does not depend upon our willingness, or actual ability to obey, but on the relation we stand in to him as his creatures and subjects. He has sworn by his life, "that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they should turn to him and live." Most certainly God means what he says.

The design of God in calling, entreating, and inviting sinners, though in many cases he knows they will not obey, is to render them inexcusable, and to show that their perdition is imputable to them alone, that the fault was in themselves why they are not saved, and that their own perverseness frustrated the methods which were used for their good. If God is true and faithful, how unreasonable is the sin of unbelief!

If he is true and faithful let us confide in him, and endeavour to imitate him in these glorious attributes.

A Heathen philosopher, when asked, "What makes men like Gods?" answered, "Their speaking the truth." Let not Christians be worse than Heathens.

CHAPTER XXII.

ON THE TRINITY.

God is an incomprehensible being. There is only one God, one Supreme Being, who created the heavens and the earth, and who is entitled to the religious homage of their inhabitants. The Bible, though it teaches the unity of God, yet represents him in some respects more than one; and the Heidelberg Cat-

echism expresses the doctrine of the Trinity in the following manner: "Since there is only but one divine essence, why speakest thou of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? Because God hath so revealed himself in his word, that these three distinct persons are the one only true and eternal God."

By the doctrine of the Trinity, as taught in the Scriptures and in our confession of faith, I understand that there are three subsistences, or persons in the Godhead, called the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who possess not a similar but the same numerical essence, and that the distinction between them is not nominal, but real.

The term Trinity has one Theophilus for its author in the year 161. And Tertullianus first introduced the word persona.

As the doctrine of the Trinity is altogether a doctrine of divine revelation, in illustrating it we must derive our arguments entirely from this source. It is remarkable, however, that some traces of it are to be found among the ancient Heathens; independent of any acquaintance with the Scriptures, they have holden the doctrine of a Triad, constituting a Monad, that is, a Supreme Being, who was one in one sense, and three in another, which, as the doctrine existed in the beginning, was probably conveyed to them by tradition, before they were separated from each other.

Zoroaster, the reformer of the Persian religion, is said to have taught that the first divine agent created all things by his wisdom and love; which, it has been remarked, "are so correspondent to the second and third persons of the Trinity exhibited in the Bible, as to lead us to conclude they must have been derived from some remains of divine revelation afforded to the patriarchs from the beginning."

The Magi taught that the Deity existed in a first, a second, and a third mind. The first was supernatural, in itself, and the principle of all essence; the second was the filial mind, generated by the first, the creator of the material world; and the third was the efficient wisdom and power of the other two.

The Hindoos, the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, Germans and Gauls, the Japanese, the Chinese, and, in several

instances the American nations, have all acknowledged a Triad. In the empires of Thibet and Tangut a triune God is constantly acknowledged in the popular religion. I shall only add, what has chiefly engaged the attention of the learned on this subject, the Platonic Trinity, as taught by Plato himself, and more fully by his followers. These philosophers held that there were three principles in the Divine Nature, and named them, το αγαθον, *the good*; the second νους, or λογος, *mind, or word*; and the third, ψυχη κοσμου, *the soul of the world*, corresponding to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

When we consider that the doctrine of a Triad has been so universally received by so many different nations, in all four quarters of the earth, and that independently of the Scriptures, we cannot, I think, fail to determine that the doctrine of the Trinity was originally revealed to the human race, and has almost everywhere been conveyed down to them by tradition.

The doctrine of the Trinity was the doctrine of the Jews, as is evident from the writings of Philo, the celebrated Jew of Alexandria; and from other Jewish commentators. It was the doctrine of the Christian Church, in its earliest ages, in the first, second, and following centuries, as will fully appear by consulting ancient records relative to this subject. Dr. Dwight has, with great care and much labour, collected the numerous testimonies of the opinions of the ancient Heathen, the Jewish church, and the primitive Christians, to whose theology I would refer you, for more and better information. Vide vol. 11, Sermōn LXXI.

As the Trinity is a doctrine of pure revelation, our first step is to search the Scriptures, in order to ascertain whether the doctrine is found in them. We commence with the Old Testament, and observe, in the first place, that the plural names of God, which occur in the Scripture, are considered by many as intimating a plurality of persons in the Godhead: we find one of these names in the first verse of the Bible. "In the beginning, אלהים, *Elohim*," literally, the Gods, "created the heavens and the earth;" and is construed with a singular verb, ברא, *bara*. "Remember," says Solomon, "thy Creator," את-נילמיד, *thy*

creators, "in the days of thy youth." Eccl. xii. 1. "Thy Maker," says Isaiah, liv. 5, "is thy husband;" literally, עשיר כעליר, *Baleich asheich*, "thy Makers is thy husbands." In some places God is called אדונים, *adonaim*, or *Lords*.

Many learned men, however, such as Calvin, and others, were of opinion that these names afford no sufficient proof of a plurality in the Godhead; but that it is owing to a peculiarity in the Hebrew language that they are given to Him, which language, they say, expresses in this manner dignity and majesty, and admits the plural and singular indifferently: others are of a contrary opinion, and consider the plural names of God as intimating a plurality in the Divine Essence. As the arguments of learned men, (Vide Dick's Theology on the Trinity), are strong on both sides, we shall not insist on this proof of a plurality in the Godhead, but proceed to notice others, of more importance, and less liable to objection.

In the second place, we prove the doctrine of the Trinity from passages where God speaks of himself in the plural number: "Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness;" "Behold the man is as one of us;" "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" "Let us go down, and there confound their tongue." Gen. i. 26; iii. 22; Isaiah vi. 8; Gen. xi. 7. These passages are certainly very remarkable, when we consider that the uniform doctrine of the Scripture is, that there is but one God.

It is objected against the proof drawn from these quotations of Scripture, that God, on these occasions, spoke according to the style and manner of monarchs, who say, "we," and "us;" or that he addressed the angels. In reply to these objections, we observe, that this style was not known in the days of Moses, and among the nations of antiquity; it appears to be a modern invention; and for the Almighty to address angels, and include them, when he created man, is beneath his majesty and dignity, and a mere figment of the Jews, unworthy our notice.

In the third place, we prove a plurality of persons in the Godhead from the following additional passages of Holy Writ.

The blessing which Aaron was commanded to pronounce upon the children of Israel, has been considered as a proof. Numb. vi. 24–26. The proof is founded on the threefold repetition of the name Jehovah, and its correspondence with the Christian benediction. 2 Cor. xiii. 14. It is remarkable that this blessing, according to an account given by certain Jewish Rabbis, was pronounced in a different accent during the utterance of each part: with the hand lifted up, and the three fingers of the hand extended, the little finger being at the time closed. This, they say, was done to express a triad, or Trinity in the Godhead.

The same construction as upon the preceding passage, may be put on the three-fold ascription of holiness to God, by the seraphim whom Isaiah saw in the temple. Isaiah vi. 3. It was the Lord who on this occasion said, “who shall go for us,” and in the New Testament we are told that the Son and the Spirit were concerned in this vision. Isaiah saw the glory of Christ at this time, John xii. 41, and it was the Holy Ghost who spake these words: “Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye, indeed, but perceive not.” Acts xxviii. 25, 26.

The following passages have been considered as proofs of the doctrine we are illustrating: “Then Jehovah rained fire and brimstone from Jehovah out of heaven.” Gen. xix. 24. In this passage, there seems to be a distinct reference to two persons: in the first, to one who from another, or in concurrence with him, destroyed the Cities of the Plain.

“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” Ps. xlv. 6. The speaker here is the Father, and the person spoken to is the Son. Heb. i. 8. “The Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me.” Isaiah xlvii. 16. There is mention made in this passage, of three persons: two who send, and one who is sent. The speaker is God; for he assumes the name and titles and works of God, calling himself the first and the last, the Creator of all things; but at the same time he says, that he was sent by God. That person is also represented as being sent by another, who is called his Spirit; not a divine influence, energy or ope-

ration; but a living intelligent agent; in a word, the Messiah is represented as a distinct person from Him who promised to send him, of whose personality the Jews never entertained any doubt.

These are some of the proofs of the plurality in the God-head, taken from the Scriptures of the Old Testament. I proceed to lay before you the evidences of this doctrine of the Trinity which are furnished in the New Testament.

I commence with the famous but much disputed text in the fifth chapter, 1 John, the 7th verse: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." In this passage three persons are mentioned as distinct witnesses, and at the same time are affirmed to be one. Some think the apostle refers, not to a unity of essence, but of testimony; or that nothing more is meant, than like the three earthly witnesses, they agree in one. This was the opinion of Calvin and Beza. Calvin's note on this passage is, "*Quod, dicit tres esse unum ad essentiam non refertur sed ad consensum potius.*" The genuineness of this text has been disputed by numerous critics; but at the same time it is considered by others as genuine.

They that are opposed to the passage, as an interpolation, say, that it is wanting in the Syriac, and other ancient versions, particularly the Coptic, the Arabic, and Ethiopic;—that it is not to be found in a single Greek manuscript, written before the sixteenth century;—that it is contained in no other ancient version, except the Latin, and not even all these contain the clause;—that it is not to be found quoted by any of the ancient fathers against the Arians, when it might have been of great service to them. The Protestant reformers altogether rejected it, or at least marked it as doubtful.

To all this, those who are in favour of the passage, reply: That the Syriac version is a defective one; the history of the adulterous woman, the second Epistle of Peter, the second and third Epistle of John, the Epistle of Jude, and the Book of the Revelation, were all wanting in it; though it is not found in any manuscript hitherto collected, yet we cannot be sure that

it does not exist, since it is acknowledged that there are many hundreds in various public libraries, which have not been collated; that it is found in the Confession of Faith, and also in the Liturgies of the Greek church, and in the primitive Liturgy of the Latin church, and in most Latin manuscripts; that it is cited by numerous Latin fathers, especially by the Catholic bishops of Africa, in their Confession of Faith—by Cyprian and Tertullian. That it was not quoted by the Greek fathers, only proves that it was not found in the copies used by them; or it might be in the copies, and yet not quoted by them, they considering the passage merely a proof of the unity of the testimony of the heavenly witnesses to the Messiahship of Christ, and not of the unity of their nature; and finally, that it was omitted by the Protestant reformers, only shows their caution and integrity. In addition to these arguments, it appears, to those who consider the passage genuine, that there is an internal evidence in its favour; they maintain that the connection of the disputed clause, and the grammatical structure of the original Greek, require its insertion; and consequently, that it should be received as genuine.

In view of the evidences for, and against the passage, it appears that, in the present state of controversy respecting the text, we can make no use of it to prove the doctrine of the Trinity. The question cannot yet be considered as decided, while it is known that many hundred manuscripts of the New Testament still remain uncollated; and should it ultimately appear that the disputed clause is spurious, its absence will not diminish the weight of irresistible evidence which other undisputed passages of Holy Writ afford to the doctrine of the Trinity. I proceed to quote some of these passages:

The transaction at our Saviour's baptism has been considered as a proof of the Trinity, because the three persons were then manifested; but we would appeal to it not as a proof, but as an illustration of the Trinity. Before we could receive it as a proof, we must know who Christ was, what was the meaning of the title Son, by which he was designated, and likewise who the Spirit was, and whether the emblem signified a person or influence.

The proof founded upon the institution of baptism, and the form of administration, is of more importance, and may be considered as a satisfactory argument. Matt. xxvii. 19.

Baptism is a religious ordinance—a dedication to the service of God, administered in no other name but that of the object of worship; we are not dedicated in baptism at the same time to the Creator and two of his creatures, or to a man like ourselves and a Divine power or influence. It appears very clear, that the initiatory rite of baptism is intended to teach us the doctrine of the Trinity; in other words, to teach us that while there is one God, there are three persons of equal dignity and authority concerned in the work of our salvation, to whom we are in duty bound to sacrifice ourselves, both in soul and body.

The apostolical benediction is another proof appealed to in favour of the doctrine of the Trinity. 2 Cor. xiii. 14. It is evidently a prayer which it would be idolatry to offer up to any but God. Yet three persons are distinctly addressed as possessing Divine perfections, and as knowing our wants and granting our requests.

Another proof is found in the Book of Revelation, i. 4, 5. This is also a prayer to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost is called the seven spirits before the throne, to signify the variety of his gifts and influences, agreeably to a Hebrew idiom, which uses the number seven to express what is perfect.

Many other passages might be advanced in proof of the doctrine of the Trinity. There are innumerable places in the New Testament where two persons besides the Father are mentioned; the one called the Son, the other the Spirit of the Father; both receive the name of Lord and God, and are invested with Divine perfections; Divine works are likewise ascribed to them, which require almighty power to perform, and they are conjoined with the Father as objects of religious worship and obedience. Now, if we believe that the writers were inspired, and moved by the Holy Ghost, we are constrained to believe that they adhered to the simple truth; and

as they represent two persons, besides the Father, as Divine, and at the same time maintain the unity of God, we necessarily conclude that they taught the doctrine of the Trinity.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ON THE TRINITY.

IN the preceding Chapter are quoted passages both from the Old and New Testament, in favour of the Trinity. We proceed, in this Chapter, to state, that although there is a plurality in the Godhead, there is only one essence; the same numerical, and not merely the same specific essence. To say that they have the same specific nature, we should maintain that there are three Gods; but by affirming that they have the same numerical essence, we maintain that there is only one God, although there are more divine persons than one. To express the unity of the essence, the word *ομουνσιος* was employed by the council of Nice, A. D. 325; and the Son was declared to be *ομουνσιος*, or consubstantial with the Father. In this one essence there is a threefold distinction, which we express by saying, that there are three persons. The Latins used the word *persona*, and the Greeks, *υποστασις*, or *προσωπον*.

When we maintain that there is one essence, and a threefold distinction in the Godhead, we do not say, that there are three distinct essences mysteriously conjoined; that the Father, Son, and Spirit possess, each of them, separately from the others, a divine nature and divine perfections; but that there is a distinction in the Godhead to which there is nothing similar in creatures, and who are one in every sense of the term. We use the word person, which we do not pretend to explain, to express that distinction; because we have none more suitable or convenient to the subject.

That the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three distinct persons, appears from the personal names, properties and works ascribed to them in Holy Scripture. The names are, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Paternity is the personal property of the first person, filiation of the second, and procession or spiration of the third. The first person begat the second, the second was begotten of the first, and the third proceeded from both. The work of creation is ascribed to the Father; redemption, to the son; and sanctification, to the Holy Spirit.

The Father is called the first person in the Trinity. We must, however, not suppose that the order of their subsistence implies priority of one to another, in time or dignity. Some modern divines, who profess to receive the doctrine of three persons in unity, are of opinion that they are not co-ordinate; they think that three co-ordinate persons would be three Gods, and therefore maintain the subordination of the Son and the Spirit. They believe that the divine nature and perfections belong to the Father and the Son, not collaterally or co-ordinately, but subordinately; that is, that the Son has the same divine nature with the Father, but communicated by the Father; so that the Father alone has the divine nature from himself; but the Son is from the Father, and therefore the Father is the fountain, origin, and principle of the divinity which is in the Son. They maintain, further, that in this their opinion corresponds exactly with the opinion of the Catholic divines who lived before and after the council of Nice. To this opinion it is objected, that it is dangerous to speak of a subordination among the persons of the Trinity; that it is almost impossible to avoid the idea of inferiority in the subordinate persons, and that it is absurd to hold this opinion, inasmuch as its advocates at the same time admit, that the persons equally possess the divine nature and perfections.

This leads me to call your attention to a very important article of divine revelation, the sonship of Christ. I shall first notice why he is so called; and secondly, in what respects he is the Son of God. Previously, I observe, that Christ is not the Son of God on account of his miraculous conception and

birth. He was the Son of God long before his conception and birth. Gal. iv. 4; John iii. 16, 17. His incarnation is not the reason of his being the Son of God; but only the manifestation of him as such; nor is he called the Son of God on account of God's raising him from the dead; his resurrection from the dead was only a manifestation of his sonship; he was declared to be the Son of God, by the resurrection from the dead; Rom. i. 4; nor doth his mediatorial office constitute him the Son of God; his mediatorial office derived virtue from his sonship; and so it cannot depend upon it. If Christ was a son by office, he would be no more than a servant, like Moses was, only of higher rank, and a greater office.

Christ is the Son of God in the highest sense of the word; he is, as the Heidelberg Catechism expresses it, "alone the eternal and natural Son of God." This will appear from those portions of Holy Scripture where he is so called, as Heb. i. 1, 2, 3, 5. Here he was called the Son of God, as being in the express image of his person, of God; as being the Creator of the world; in express distinction from angels and from any of the most exalted creatures. "For unto which of the angels, said he at any time, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" He is called God's own Son. Rom. viii. 32. His only begotten Son. John iii. 16, 17. His first begotten. Col. i. 13. The first born of every creature.

Our Lord is said to be the Son of God before he came into the world. Gal. iv. 4; Luke i. 35.

But in what respect is Christ the Son of God? We answer, by eternal generation. And what is meant by eternal generation? We reply, that we do not know; it is beyond our limited conception. How Christ sustains the relation of Son, who can tell? The Holy Ghost has been pleased to make use of the word generation to convey to us in the most intelligent manner that mystery. I say it is a mystery. We can conceive of the communication of a material essence by one material being to another, because it takes place in the generation of animals; but the communication of a spiritual, indivisible, immutable essence, is altogether inconceivable. Let us be content

with the knowledge of the fact, and with the language of Scripture, which simply tells us that the Son was begotten by the Father, but does not tell us how he was begotten. If we cannot explain how a plant grows and an animal is formed, much less can we comprehend this mystery.

There have been various opinions concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, for the purpose of removing the difficulties with which it is attended, and to reconcile it to the dictates of human reason, which cannot understand how three can be One.

Praxeas, in the second century, taught that there was no real distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and that the Father, sole Creator of all things, united himself to the human nature of Christ. His followers were called Patricians, because, according to them, it was the Father who suffered on the cross.

The same doctrine was taught in the beginning of the following century by Noetus; and several years after, with some variations, by Sabellius, an African bishop, or presbyter. He maintained that God was only one person, and that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were different aspects or manifestations of the same Being; that there was no real Trinity, but God was *τριωνυμος*, or had three names. He appeared as the Father at one time, as the Son at another, and as the Holy Ghost at another, as different occasions required it. While Praxeas and Noetus affirmed that the Father united himself to the man Jesus Christ; Sabellius held that an energy or a portion of the divine nature was communicated to him; and that the Holy Ghost was also a portion of the Father.

Arius, in the fourth century, and his followers, acknowledged three distinct persons, but not three equal persons subsisting in one undivided essence. They rejected the word *ομοουσιος*, consubstantial, and admitted that the Son was *ομοιουσιος*, of a like nature to the Father. Though they spoke in very high and exalted terms of Christ, they maintained that he was a mere creature, who owed his existence to the will and power of the Father; and they held the same sentiments respecting the Holy Ghost.

We conclude by mentioning a few of the objections to the

doctrine of the Trinity by its opponents. First, it is objected that it is inconsistent with the unity of God as taught in the Scriptures.

The Scriptures do indeed teach that there is but one God; but at the same time they speak of a plurality of persons in God, and ascribe to them divine perfections and divine works. Now the Scriptures must either contradict themselves, and therefore are not inspired, or there is some other mode of reconciling their different statements that God is one, and more than one. The only way of reconciling them is the doctrine of one divine essence, with personal distinctions.

A second objection is, that the doctrine of the Trinity is contrary to reason. It would indeed be so if we asserted that God is one and three in the same respect, that he has one nature and three natures, or one person and three persons. This surely would be a palpable contradiction; but when we say that God is one, in respect to his essence, but three in respect of some unknown distinction in his essence, can we be justly charged with maintaining a contradictory proposition? It is one thing to assert that a doctrine is above reason, and another that it is contradictory to reason.

In the last place, it is objected, that the doctrine of the Trinity is speculative—that it has no influence on practical religion, and is therefore unworthy of notice. In opposition to this objection, we maintain that the doctrine of the Trinity is by no means a speculative point, and that it has a powerful influence on practical piety; without the knowledge of this doctrine, it is impossible to understand the grandest of the works of God, redemption, in which the three persons act distinct and conspicuous parts. To each of these persons in the Godhead we owe gratitude, distinctly, and are bound to give to each the glory to which they are entitled. We are baptized in their name, and consecrated to their service, and our prayers are addressed, not to God, absolutely considered, but to the Father through the Son, by the assistance of the Holy Ghost. The Christian system of duty is founded upon this doctrine, and without the belief of it, there can be no acceptable religion. It is the very foundation of practical piety.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ON THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

THE deity of Christ will be the subject of this chapter. As his divinity is a doctrine of pure revelation, unassisted reason can give us no aid, and we must have recourse to the Scriptures for the only evidence by which it can be proved.

As Unitarians maintain that our Saviour began to be when he was born, or was conceived in the womb of his mother like another man, who, prior to that period, existed only in the elements of his being; therefore, before entering upon the proofs for his divinity, I would call your attention to his pre-existing state. In the holy Scriptures we find many passages which obviously imply his pre-existence. The Scriptures represent him as "having come down from heaven;" "having come from above;" "having come forth from the Father, and come into the world." John iii. 13, 31; vi. 38; xvi. 28. The phrase, "to come into the world," when used in reference to men in general, simply denotes being born; but "to come forth from the Father, and come into the world," is different, and implies existence with the Father prior to his birth.

The phrases, coming from above, and coming down from heaven, are determinate; they obviously import, that our Lord had his residence above, or in heaven, before he manifested himself in the flesh. We nowhere find the expression applied to the mission of any other person; it is nowhere said that Moses, or Elijah, or the Baptist, came down from heaven. Since, then, these expressions are used or applied to Christ, there must be a peculiar reason for it; and what can it be but his prior existence! Christ himself has settled the meaning, by his words to the Jews, who were offended at his calling himself the living bread that came down from heaven. "What if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" as he really did ascend, there can be no doubt that he really did descend from it.

The phrase, "to come into the flesh," evidently implies the pre-existence of our Saviour. 1 John iv. 2, 3. It does not simply mean, that he partook of human nature, but that he assumed it. It is expressive of an act by which he became man, and necessarily supposes the possession of another nature by which that act was performed.

The passage you find recorded in the Gospel of John, chapter i. 1, 2, is another proof of the pre-existence of Christ. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word. The same was in the beginning with God. What does the word *αρχη*, here translated the beginning, mean? Does it mean the commencement of his ministry, as Socinians say? No; this cannot be its meaning; but it denotes eternity, because it appears from the context to have preceded the creation. It implies that the *λογος* existed before he was made flesh.

I shall mention only two other passages, which are so plain and expressive, that they need no comment. The first you find recorded in the Gospel of John viii. 56-58: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am." The other in John xvii. 5: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." In this passage, our Lord evidently speaks of a glory in reference to the future and the past. The import of the prayer is, that his original glory might be manifested in a particular manner, or after a temporary obscuration.

The pre-existence of Christ is sufficiently established by the passages quoted; and the doctrine of his simple humanity is proved to be unscriptural. But the great and important subject now to be considered is, what is the character of Christ? if he is not a mere man, is he truly God, God equal to the Father? This we shall endeavour to prove from Scripture. Jesus Christ is proved to be God equal with the Father, by the ascription of the same names, perfections, and works, and worship to him.

In the first place, let us attend to the Divine Names ascribed to Christ in the Scriptures:

He is directly called God; in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. In this passage, John has not only declared that Christ is God; but, to prevent any possible mistake concerning what he meant by the word God, has told us, that he is co-eternal with God the Father, and that he is the Creator of every thing which exists.

Romans ix. 5: "Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed, for ever. Amen." This passage furnishes a decisive answer to the question respecting the divinity of Christ. The adversaries of Christ's divinity, knowing that it is entirely opposed to their system, have endeavoured by every possible method to destroy its force. They say it is a doxology addressed to God the Father, on account of the privileges bestowed upon the Jewish nation, in review of his goodness towards that people. They assert that the apostle burst forth into an expression of praise, "God be blessed for ever!" But this cannot be the meaning of the clause in consideration. In all the doxologies where *ευλογητος* occurs in the New Testament, and in the Septuagint, which has been observed in more than forty instances, it is placed at the beginning of the sentence. If, then, Paul had intended a doxology, he would have said: *ευλογητος ο ων επι παντων Θεος εις τους αιωνας*. As he has placed the words in a different order, they are plainly and necessarily an affirmation concerning the person of Christ, who is pronounced to be God.

1 Timothy iii. 16: "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the flesh." The first clause of this passage, *Θεος εφανερωθη εν σαρκι*, has various readings: instead of *Θεος*, some manuscripts have *ος* or *ο*, which or who. The insertion, however, of *Θεος* for *ος*, or *ος* for *Θεος*, can be easily accounted for: in ancient times the Greek was written in capitals, and frequently it was written contractedly: thus, for *πατηρ*, $\overline{\pi\rho}$;—*Θεος*, $\overline{\Theta\epsilon}$. If, therefore, the middle stroke of the Θ in $\overline{\Theta\epsilon}$, happened to be faint or obliterated, and the dash above not very apparent, then $\overline{\Theta\epsilon}$, the contraction for ΘEOC , God, might be mistaken for ΘC , which or who, and *vice versa*.

Psalm xlv. 6, 7, quoted in Hebrews i. 8, 9: "Unto the Son he saith, thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness." This is addressed by God, the Father, to the Son. The Father, therefore, thought proper to call the Son God. That we may be assured that he is called God, in the full and perfect sense, he declares that the throne of the Son is for ever and ever.

2 Peter i. 1. "To them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God, our Saviour, Jesus Christ," according to the original, "of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ."

John xx. 28, Thomas said unto him, "my Lord and my God." In this passage, Christ was acknowledged by Thomas as his Lord and God; and surely, if he had been in an error, his master would have set him right. There are many other passages in which the name of God is given to our Saviour.

He is called the great God: Titus ii. 13; Emmanuel, God with us: Mal. i. 23; Isaiah vii. 14. Christ is called the true God; 1 John v. 20; the mighty God; Psalms l. 1-3; Isaiah ix. 6; God, the first and the last; Rev. xxi. 5-7.

Christ is called Jehovah. The name Jehovah is peculiar to God, by which he is distinguished from all other beings. The Psalmist says, "That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth." Ps. lxxxiii. 18. God has most solemnly declared that he will not give it, and consequently that it ought not to be given, to any other. Isa. xlii. 8. If it can be shown that this name is given to Christ in Holy Scripture, we may consider it as an unanswerable argument to prove his Divinity.

Let me refer you to several passages of Scripture. He whom Isaiah (vi. 1) saw on a throne, is not only called Adonai, but, by the Seraphim, Jehovah (3), and so by Isaiah (5), which words Christ applies to himself; and observes that those things Isaiah said when he saw his glory, and spoke of him. John, xii. 39-41. The prophecy recorded in Isaiah, xl. 3, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the

Lord," is applied by the Evangelist Matthew (iii. 1-3) unto, and interpreted of, John the Baptist; hence the Jehovah, whose way he was to prepare, could be no other than Christ. He whom the Israelites tempted in the wilderness, is expressly called Jehovah—Ex. xvii. 7; and from 1 Cor. x. 9, we learn that this person was Christ. And again, the Messiah, or Christ, is expressly called the Lord or Jehovah, our righteousness. Jer. xxiii. 6.

These passages are sufficient to show that our Saviour receives the name of Jehovah; and as God appropriates it to himself, and declares that he will not give it to another, it follows that Christ is God, eternal and independent in his existence.

In the second place, we prove the Divinity of Christ from the peculiar attributes of God, ascribed to him in the Scriptures.

First, Eternity is ascribed to Christ. He is said to have been "in the beginning with God;" that is, as the Evangelist explains it, "before anything was made"—"to have been before all things," and "to have had glory with the Father before the world was." John i. 2; xvii. 5. Additional passages to prove the eternity of Christ, you will find recorded, Rev. i. 17, 18 and xxii. 13; Isa. xli. 4; xlv. 6; xlviii. 12; Rev. i. 8.

In the second place, another perfection which is ascribed to Christ, is omnipresence. Matt. xviii. 20: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt. xxviii. 20: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," John iii. 13: "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven." From these passages, we learn that Christ is present in every Christian assembly which may be convened at the same time throughout the world; that he is present with each of his ministering servants, wherever they may be; that he is at the same time in heaven and upon earth. These things could not be, unless he were omnipresent.

In the third place, the Scriptures teach that Christ is omniscient. John xxi. 17. "Peter saith unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things." Matt. xi. 27. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any one the Father, save the Son; and he, to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." John ii. 23-25. "Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man." Rev. ii. 23. "I am he, that searcheth the reins and hearts." From these quotations we learn that Christ knows all things; that he knoweth all men, and what is in man; and that he searcheth the reins and the heart; therefore must be omniscient.

Farther, immutability is ascribed to him, which is a divine attribute, incommunicable to a creature. Heb. xiii. 8. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," or, the same in all ages, the past, present, and to come. Psalm cii. 27. And thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest; yea, all of them shall wax old, as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. These words are quoted by Paul, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, to prove the superiority of the Son to angels, and they refer immediately to his immutable duration.

Lastly, divine power is ascribed to him; but the consideration of his omnipotence leads me to the next part of our division.

In the third place, we prove the divinity of Christ from the works which are ascribed to him, and which are evidently such as no mere man, and no creature could perform. Of this the opponents of his deity are aware, and accordingly employ their arts of criticism to prove that he did not perform them.

I observe, that the creation of all things is ascribed to Christ. John i. 3; Colossians i. 16; Hebrews i. 10; quoted from Psalm cii. 25.

The preservation of all things is also ascribed to Christ, in the most explicit manner. Colossians i. 17; Hebrews i. 1, 2.

The government of all things is, in the same distinct manner, applied to Christ. Psalm xlv. 6.

The second Psalm is an illustrious exhibition of the universal dominion of Christ.

The seventy-second Psalm is also a still more glorious exhibition of the same subject. Again, Ps. cx. 1; Ps. viii. 5; Isai. ix. 6, 7; Daniel vii. 13, 14.

The same doctrine is pursued in the same explicit manner throughout the New Testament. Rom. ix. 5; 1 Cor. xv. 25; Ephesians i. 20; Philippians ii. 9-11.

The act of giving and restoring life is also expressly ascribed to Christ in a variety of ways. John v. 21, 28, 29. His own resurrection, as well as that of others, is ascribed to his power. John ii. 19, 21; John x. 17, 18. Another most wonderful exhibition of this astonishing power will be made by him, as he himself has told us, in raising up the dead at the last day. John vi. 44, 56; John v. 28.

The forgiveness of sin is expressly ascribed to Christ. Acts vii. 59, 60; Matthew ix. 2, 7.

The act of giving eternal life is abundantly ascribed to him. John x. 27, 28; Revelation xxi. 6; ii. 7; iii. 5.

To Christ is ascribed the great and awful act of judging the world, and of acquitting and condemning angels and men. John v. 22; Romans xiv. 10; Matthew xxv. 31, 32.

Thus we see the Scriptures teach us that the works of creating and upholding all things, raising the dead, forgiving sins, and judging the world, are ascribed to Christ; all of which prove him to be a divine person, God equal with the Father.

I proceed in the last place to prove the divinity of Christ from the religious honours which are given to him.

Divine worship is required to be rendered to Christ. John v. 22, 23.

To worship Christ is commanded to both men and angels. Phil. ii. 9-11.

David worshipped Christ in Psalm xlv. and lxxii. and cii.

In the two first, he declares that the people shall praise him, and fear him, and fall down before him, and serve him for ever and ever.

In the last, he makes to him a long-continued prayer.

In Isaiah vi. the Seraphim worshipped him.

Stephen, in Acts vii. 59, 60, prayed to Christ.

Paul often prayed to him. 1 Thess. iii. 11, 12.

The baptismal service, directed by Christ himself, is an act of religious worship to Christ. The blessing pronounced on Christian assemblies is an act of religious worship rendered to Christ. 2 Corinthians; Ephesians vi. 23.

Rev. v. 11, 12, 13, we find creation worshipping Christ with the Father.

Finally, so universal was the custom of praying to Christ, that the primitive Christians were entitled as their distinguishing appellation, "Those who called on the name of Christ." Acts ix. xiv; 1 Cor. i. 1; 2 Tim. ii. 22; Rom. ix. 12.

In all these instances, and in this universal manner, was Christ worshipped; but religious worship is lawfully rendered to God only. Matt. x. 12.

If Christ be not God, God has commanded another to be worshipped; and persons under the immediate direction of the Spirit have worshipped another.

It has been objected, that the Scriptures in several places speak of Christ as inferior to the Father. "The Son can do nothing of himself; but what he seeth the Father do." John v. 19.

"Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son but the Father." Mark xiii. 32.

"My Father is greater than I." John xiv. 28.

In reference to these passages, I would observe that there are two natures in Christ, the divine and human; and what is peculiar to each nature is frequently attributed to the whole person. In the texts just quoted, the human nature of Christ is meant; and as man, it is readily admitted, he is inferior to the Father.

It is objected, that our Lord excludes himself from the honour of divinity in these words: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

We grant that our Lord would have denied his own divinity, if he had said that the Father only is God, to the exclusion of himself; but it is quite evident that he merely distinguishes his Father from other pretenders to divinity. He does not say, "thou only art the true God," but "thou art the only true God."

An objection is drawn from his answer to the person who said to him, "Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Matt. xix. 16. The objection is this: God is good, and therefore he who denies that this epithet ought to be applied to himself, is not God. "Why callest thou me good?" was the answer of our Lord. He adapted his answer to the notions which the inquirer entertained of him; plainly looking upon him as merely a human teacher.

Jesus does not speak of himself agreeably to what he really is, but according to this person's apprehensions; and hence it is unfair to deny his Divinity, because he refused to be addressed in language which should be appropriated to God, by one who believed him to be a creature.

CHAPTER XXV.

ON THE DIVINITY OF THE HOLY GHOST.

IN the preceding chapter, I endeavoured to prove the Deity of our Saviour. In this, I shall lay before you the proofs in favour of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost.

In the first place, it will be necessary to consider the personality of the spirit; especially so, as some suppose him to be no more than a Divine attribute—as the wisdom, but usually the power of God.

The supposition that the Holy Spirit is an attribute of God, renders the language of the Scriptures unintelligible and unmeaning. For example: It is said, in Acts x. 38, God

anointed Jesus with the Holy Ghost and with power. This passage, read according to the meaning of those who maintain that the spirit of God is an attribute, say power, would stand thus: God anointed Jesus with the Holy power of God, and with power. Rom. xv. 13: Now, the God of peace fill you with all joy and peace, in believing that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost; that is, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Power of God. Verse 19: Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; that is, mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Power of God. 1 Cor. ii. 4: In demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that is, in demonstration of power, and of power.

This scheme renders our Saviour's account of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost unmeaning. Matt. xii. 31. Blasphemy cannot be directed against an attribute. Evil speaking can be directed only against a percipient being; because such a being only is capable of perceiving, or being in any way affected by, the evil intended. If any one should suppose that the blasphemy in question is directed against God himself, through the medium of this attribute, how inconceivable is it that blasphemy against God should be forgiven; while the blasphemy against his Power can never be forgiven!

That the Holy Ghost is not an attribute, is evident from Acts v. 3. "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost?"

A lie is a wilful deception, and can be told only to intelligent beings; because such beings only can perceive the meaning of the saying with which the liar intends to deceive. Every one knows that we cannot lie to a tree, or an ox; because they must be unconscious of what we say. But an attribute is as unconscious as an ox, or a tree; and although God perceives all things, yet his power perceives nothing.

All the attributes and actions of a person are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is said to strive. Gen. vi. 3. To be sent forth. Gal. iv. 6; John xv. 26. To move. Gen. i. 2. To know. 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11. To speak. John xvi. 13;

Acts x. 19; viii. 20; Rev. ii. 7; xxii. 17. To guide. John xvi. 13. To help. Rom. viii. 26. To testify. Rom. viii. 16; John xv. 26. To reveal. Eph. iii. 5; John xiv. 26. To search. 1 Cor. ii. 10. To prophesy. John xvi. 13; 1 Tim. iv. 1. To intercede. Rom. viii. 26. To give gifts. 1 Cor. xii. 8-10. To work miracles. Rom. xv. 19. To sanctify. 1 Cor. vi. 11. To quicken, or give life. John vi. 63. To be pleased. Acts xv. 28. To be vexed. Isaiah lxiii. 10. To be provoked, to be resisted, and to be grieved.

That all these things should be said of an attribute, especially of the attribute of power, will, I presume, be acknowledged to be incredible.

Having proved the personality of the Holy Ghost, I proceed to consider his divinity. This doctrine is proved by the same arguments which were used in establishing the Deity of the Son.

The same names are given to the Spirit which are given to the Father and the Son.

The incommunicable name, Jehovah, signifying underived, independent, and immutable existence, and which cannot therefore be given to any creature, is given to the Holy Ghost, of which we have an instance in Isaiah vi. 8, 9, 10. This passage is quoted by Paul, Acts xxviii. 25, 26, 27, as spoken by the Holy Ghost. From this passage we learn that the Lord, or Jehovah, who spake to Isaiah in the passage quoted, was the Holy Ghost.

Again: Compare Jeremiah xxxi. 31-34, with Heb. x. 15-17. In them, as in the one already recited, what is spoken by Jehovah in the Prophet is said by the Apostle to have been spoken by the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost is also called God. This is evident from the two following passages. The first is in the fifth chapter of the Acts, where Peter, having said to Ananias, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" Thou hast not lied unto men but unto God. According to Peter, to lie to the Holy Ghost is to lie to God, and not to man, because the Holy Ghost is not man; nor to lie to any creature or an angel,

because the Holy Ghost is not an angel or a creature, but to lie to God, because the Holy Ghost is God.

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul says to them, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1 Cor. iii. 16. And in another place; "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" 1 Cor. vi. 19.

From both passages, it is plain that the reason why they were the temple of God, was that the Holy Ghost dwelt in them. But the inference would not be just, if the Holy Ghost were a creature; they might be his temple, and not be the temples of God. A temple is the habitation of the Deity; but there is no way in which we are his habitation, except by the presence of his Spirit. Now, if the presence of the Spirit is the presence of God, it follows, that the Spirit is God.

Divine attributes are ascribed to the Holy Ghost. He is represented as possessing the attribute of eternity, in the following passage; Heb. ix. 14; "Christ who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself."

Another attribute of God, ascribed to the Holy Ghost, is immensity, or omnipresence. Ps. cxxxix. 7-10.

A third divine perfection, of which the Spirit is possessed, is omniscience. "The Spirit," says Paul, "searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." 1 Cor. ii. 10. The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 1 Cor. x. 11.

Almighty power is also ascribed to the Holy Ghost. The illustration of this particular will be given under the next division.

The third proof for the divinity of the Spirit, is taken from the works which he performs, and which presuppose the worker to be omnipotent. Creation is ascribed to him, in Job xxv. 13, and xxxiii. 4. Miracles are represented as performed by his power. Matt. xii. 28; 1 Cor. xii. 9-11. Lastly, the resurrection of the dead, which is appropriated to God, in the Scriptures, is ascribed to him. Rom. viii. 11.

The last proof for the divinity of the Holy Ghost, is founded on the religious worship which is given to him.

We are baptized in his name, as well as in that of the Father and the Son. His equality, in dignity, is declared by his association with them in this solemn act of religion. It is performed by his authority, as well as by theirs; and we and our children are dedicated as expressly to his service, as to that of the other persons of the Trinity. We have an example of prayer to him, in the words, which are still used in the solemn benediction of the Church. 2 Cor. viii. 11.

The words of John, in the beginning of the Revelation, are also considered as a prayer to the Spirit. Rev. i. 4, 5. To conclude, we are taught that the sin against the Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. Matt. xxxi. 32. If the sin against the Holy Ghost is of such a heinous nature, more so than those committed against the Father or the Son, must we not draw the conclusion, that we are at least equally to honour and worship him?

It remains to speak of the relation of the Holy Ghost to the other persons of the Godhead. On this point there was a great controversy, in the ninth century, between the Latin and Greek churches. The Greek, or eastern church, maintained that he proceeded from the Father. The Latin, or western church, taught that he proceeded from the Father and the Son, and inserted the following words in their creed: "*Credimus in Spiritum Sanctum ex Patre Filioque procedentem.*" This controversy, being heightened by other grounds of dispute, terminated in their open separation from the communion of each other.

The Greeks founded their arguments in favour of their opinion on those passages of Scripture, where it is said, that the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father, John xv. 26; and the Latins thought themselves equally justified by plain Scripture reasoning in maintaining their opinion. They maintained that, although the procession of the Spirit from the Son is not literally asserted, yet it is implied in some things which are said of him in relation to the Son. The same expressions which are used concerning the Holy Ghost, in reference to the Father, because he proceeds from him, are used in reference

to the Son; and hence they concluded that the reason is the same. The Holy Ghost is called the Spirit of the Father, because he proceeds from him. Matt. x. 20. But he is also called the Spirit of the Son. Gal. iv. 6; Rom. viii. 9. Why should we not therefore believe, that the same relation is expressed in the one case as in the other? There is no doubt both Churches had arguments on their side, deduced from the interpretation of particular passages, and should therefore have carried on the controversy with more mildness, and mutually have exercised the spirit of forbearance, and considered that their difference related to a point which neither understood.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ON THE DECREES OF GOD.

IN the preceding Chapter, we exhibited and vindicated the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and the divinity of the Son and the Holy Ghost. We now proceed to consider the acts of the Divine Nature. Systematic divines make a three-fold distinction: they distinguish them first into immanent and intrinsic acts, which have no respect to any thing external; such as, the generation of the Son, and the procession of the Spirit, and the mutual love of the Divine persons towards each other; or, secondly, extrinsic and transitive acts, which are not in God, but from God efficiently, and in creatures subjectively. To create, to uphold, and govern, are acts of this kind. Or, thirdly, into immanent and intrinsic acts, which have no relation to any thing without him, and these are his decrees.

The decrees of God are his settled purpose, whereby he fore-ordains whatever comes to pass.

The doctrine of the decrees has been, and still is, a subject of much controversy among mankind. It is not, however, as some think, a novel doctrine. The opinion that whatever occurs in the world at large, or in the lot of private individuals,

is the result of a previous and unalterable arrangement by that Supreme Power which presides over nature, has always been held by many of the vulgar, and has been believed by speculative men. The ancient stoics, whom the Jewish Essenes followed, believed this doctrine. Mahomet introduced into his Koran the doctrine of the absolute predestination of the course of human affairs. He represented life and death, prosperity and adversity, and every event that befalls a man in this world, as the result of a previous determination of the one God, who rules over all. Augustine and the earliest reformers, but especially Calvin, favoured this doctrine; and it was generally asserted and introduced into most of the confessions of faith of the reformed churches.

Before I proceed to prove the doctrine of the Divine Decrees, I shall make a few remarks on the connection between the knowledge and decree of God.

It has been frequently said, "that the Decrees of God are the consequence of his knowledge, and that his foreknowledge is in consequence of his decrees;" and it is asked, how it is possible that God should foreknow the existence of anything until he has decreed that it should exist. In reply, it is said that the phraseology, if applied to men or other finite beings, might be correct. Such beings usually consider; then determine, and then foresee, and, as far as is applicable to their nature and circumstances, foreknow the event. But when applied to God, it is erroneous; because there is no succession in the Divine Mind.

There is not, there cannot be, one act by which God knows anything, or all things; another following it, by which he determines their existence; and then another, by which he foreknows that they will exist. Whatever exists in the Divine Mind, exists co-etaneously and co-eternally with all other things which exist. Whatever may be intended by knowledge, foreknowledge, or decrees, all is simultaneous or absolutely co-existent.

That there are decrees in God, is evident from reason. God is a spirit; according to his spiritual nature, he must

always be active. God is eternal in all his perfections, and therefore nothing new can occur to him. Whatever he determines this day, he determined from all eternity. God is an independent Being; everything that happens in time, must happen according to his will, because if not so, he could not be independent. God is immutable: as no change can take place in his perfections, so his will cannot be changed. His foreknowledge implies that all things he knows must really happen, and were so appointed, and finally his infinite wisdom suggested the end, and adopted the best means for accomplishing the end, and this will most assuredly be effected.

That there are decrees in God, is evident from Scripture. The Scriptures make mention of the decrees of God in many passages, and in a variety of terms. They speak of his foreknowledge, his purpose, his will, his good pleasure, the determinate counsel of his will, and his predestination. Christ, says an apostle, "was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Acts ii. 23. "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate." Rom. viii. 29. "He hath made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself." Eph. i. 9. "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Eph. i. 11.

Many other passages might be quoted, but let these suffice; while we call your attention

To the objects of God's decrees. They relate to all future things, without exception; whatever was done in time, was foreordained before the beginning of time. In general, the decrees of God extend to all things necessary, free, and contingent; to all things great and small, and to such things as we call accidents. In particular, they extend to our birth, to our habitation, to our life and death, and to our future state of existence in the world to come. Our days are numbered, and so are the hairs of our heads. The most insignificant creatures, and the most minute events, the death of a sparrow, are not excluded from the providence of God. Numerous passages of Holy Scripture might be quoted to confirm this doctrine; we will

refer you to a few. Ps. cxxxix. 16; Acts xvii. 26; Job xiv. 5; Eccl. iii. 1, 2; Isaiah xxxviii. 5; Ps. xc. 3, 10; xxxix. 5, 6, 7; cxxxix. 16; 1 Sam. ii. 6.

I proceed to lay before you some of the properties of the divine decrees.

These decrees are eternal. This is readily granted, with respect to some of the decrees, for example, those which relate to the creation of the world, and man, and to the mission of Christ; but it has been maintained that those which relate to things dependent upon the free agency of man, are made in time. Temporal decrees — decrees made in time, suppose the knowledge of God to be limited, and that he is receiving new accessions to it in the progress of time, and is in direct opposition to the Scriptures; they expressly affirm, that believers were chosen in Christ before the world began; Eph. i. 4; 2 Tim. i. 9; and an apostle says, Acts xv. 18, known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world. No man, who believes that the Divine understanding is infinite, comprehending the past, the present, and the future, will assent to the doctrine of temporal decrees. Is there anything which God does not know? Is he ignorant of events, which depend upon human volitions? Has he not foretold them, in innumerable instances, as is evident from the fulfilment of prophecy?

The decrees of God are wise. This character belongs to his decrees, because, from what we know of them, he has selected the most proper ends, and the fittest means of accomplishing them; namely, the manifestation of his glory, and the promotion of the general good of his creatures. The apostle, in contemplating this subject, exclaims, with reverence and adoration: "O! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Rom. xi. 33.

The decrees of God are free — without any compulsion. When he made his decrees, he was alone, and his determinations were influenced by no external cause. Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him

in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? Isaiah xl. 13, 14.

The decrees of God are unconditional. It is granted, that some of them are conditional, that is, something is supposed to go before the event, which is the object of the decree, and that this order being established, the one will not take place without the other. For instance, God decreed to save Paul and his companions, on their voyage to Italy; but he at the same time decreed the means of their preservation; he decreed to save them, on condition that the sailors should remain in the ship. God decreed to save many from the wrath to come, but he has decreed to save them, only, if they repent and believe. These decrees appear to be conditional, because they merely state the order in which the events should be accomplished; and establish a connexion between the means and the end, but do not leave the means uncertain. God, then, hath decreed both the end and the means, so that it does not depend upon the will of man, that he may will, or not will, as he pleases. "My counsel," says God, "shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Isaiah xlv. 10. "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Eph. i. 11.

It is objected to this view we take of the decrees of God, that, if God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, the whole series of events is necessary, and human liberty is destroyed; men are passive instruments in the hands of God, and are not responsible for their actions; yea, God is the author of sin.

In reply to this objection, it is maintained that the divine decree is extrinsic to the human mind; that it exerts no influence or force upon our faculties; and that while it insures the events to come, it leaves them to be accomplished in the exercise of our liberty.

God has determined that some things should be brought to pass necessarily, and that others should be brought to pass freely; that men should act freely and agreeably to their rational nature.

That God has fore-ordained whatever comes to pass, and

that man is a free agent, are undeniable truths. Of both these truths we are assured by the Scriptures; and the latter is confirmed by the testimony of conscience. We feel, although not independent of God, we are free, so that we excuse ourselves when we have done our duty, and accuse ourselves when we have neglected it.

Such feelings of approbation and disapprobation, in reference to our own conduct, or that of other men, would have no existence in our minds if we believed that men are necessary agents. But who can comprehend and explain the connexion that exists between the Divine decrees and human liberty? "Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it." Ps. cxxxix. 6.

We are not required to reconcile the Divine decrees and human liberty. It is enough to know that God has decreed all things that come to pass, and that men are responsible for their actions. If everything in religion was plain to our understanding, there would be no room for faith. It is better to believe humbly than to reason presumptuously. And presumptuous are all those assertions which deny the immutability of the Divine decrees and the free agency of man; and which make man a machine, and God the author of sin.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ON PREDESTINATION.

IN the preceding chapter, I endeavoured to prove that there are Divine decrees; to show to what they relate, and to illustrate their properties.

In this chapter I shall consider more particularly those decrees of God which relate to his intelligent creatures. They are generally comprehended under the title of predestination. The term includes the decrees of election and reprobation.

In reference to this subject, there have been different opin-

ions and different systems espoused by divines of different denominations.

The first is that of the Supralapsarians. They maintain that God decreed to create man after his own image, but to place him in such circumstances that his fall would necessarily follow; to send his Son to suffer and die for those whom he had chosen to salvation; to call them effectually in time, and to convert and sanctify them: while the others should be delivered up to blindness and impenitence. They believe that the Divine decrees had no respect to the fall of man, except it was the means of executing them. Men, they say, were chosen, or rejected, without any consideration of the fall, and were viewed by God, not as sinners, but simply as creatures. They maintain further, that the object of God in this decree was the manifestation of his infinite perfections, especially his mercy and justice, the happiness of some of his creatures, and the misery of others.

This doctrine is revolting to the human mind; to think that God in his absolute sovereignty should destine his intelligent creatures to eternal misery, not only before they had committed sin, but prior to the consideration of it, and that solely for the purpose of glorifying his name; and that the formal and direct introduction of sin should be the fittest expedient for obtaining the end he had in view. We do not believe that this is the doctrine of the Bible, or of our Church. We do not believe that God created any man to be miserable and damned for ever; but if he is lost, that it is owing to his own wilful disobedience and rejection of the terms of salvation.

The Sublapsarians believe that God having foreseen from all eternity that man would fall from a state of innocence, decreed to permit the fall, and to send his Son to suffer and die for the sins of the world; but that he elected some of the human race to everlasting life, and left the rest to perish in their sins. They differ from the Supralapsarians with respect to the character in which the objects of his purpose were considered, affirming that they were regarded not simply as creatures, but as sinners.

The third system is that of the Arminians. The Arminians, who deny absolute and unconditional decrees, believe that whatever God has decreed respecting men, is founded upon their conduct. They say that God foresaw that Adam would involve himself and all his posterity in sin and misery; that he decreed to send his Son to suffer and die for the sins of the whole world, and to give men sufficient grace to improve the means of salvation; but God, knowing beforehand who would believe and persevere unto the end, and who would not, chose the former unto eternal life, and left the latter to perish in their sins.

Some, indeed, have been led to affirm, that men are elected to salvation after they have believed; and should they relapse into a state of impenitence and unbelief, may be finally lost, and perish in their sins.

The doctrine of the German reformed church on this important subject of election, is fully expressed in the Heidelberg Catechism, in the 54th answer to the question:

“What believest thou concerning the holy Catholic church?”

Answer: “That the Son of God, from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to himself, by his Spirit and his word, out of the whole human race, a church, *chosen* to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith, and that I am, and for ever shall be, a living member thereof.”

That God did, in the exercise of his sovereign grace, make choice of certain individuals to enjoy salvation by Jesus Christ, is evident from various passages of Holy Scripture.

The Scriptures speak of certain persons under the character of the elect, as chosen in Christ, Rom. xvi. 13; as chosen to salvation, 2 Thess. ii. 13; as predestinated to the adoption of sons, Eph. i. 5, and to be conformed to the image of God's son, Rom. viii. 29; as elect according to the foreknowledge of God, 1 Pet. i. 2; as vessels of mercy, whom he hath before prepared unto glory, Rom. ix. 23. The phrases contained in these quotations, manifestly refer to some act of God in relation to the persons designated, by which they are distinguished from others.

To choose, implies that, of a number of persons, some are taken and others are left. It is an election of persons, and not of characters; that is, it is not a general design to confer salvation on those who shall repent and believe, but a specification of those who shall actually enjoy it. Hence their names are said to be written in heaven, Heb. xii. 23, and to be written in the book of life, Phil. iv. 3; Rev. xiii. 8.

There are persons whom God foreknew, whom he calls and distinguishes in his dispensation of grace, as he had previously distinguished them in his purpose. Even so, at the present time, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. What then? Israel hath not obtained what it seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. Rom. xi. 5-7.

The election of certain persons was made from eternity. "We are bound," says Paul to the Thessalonians, 2 Thess. ii. 13, "to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, because God hath from the beginning, chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit." He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Eph. i. 4. "He hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which were given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." 2 Tim. i. 9. "Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world." Acts xv. 18. Election is not founded upon anything good foreseen in the creature, but on the good pleasure of the will of God. It is ascribed to grace, to the exclusion of works. Rom. xi. 5, 6. Faith and holiness, which some make the causes, are expressly said in Scripture to be the effects of it. 2 Thess. ii. 13; Eph. i. 4. In the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, Paul produces the case of Jacob and Esau as an illustration of the subject, and traces the predestination of individuals to happiness or misery, to the free grace of God, without any consideration of their works. Rom. ix. 10-13. As the lot of the two sons of Isaac was settled prior to their personal conduct, so the apostle signifies, that the appointment of particular persons to salvation, depends solely upon the good pleasure of God.

Indeed, how is it possible that God could foresee faith and holiness in men previous to their election? human nature being totally depraved, they can have no existence but as the effects of divine grace, the communication of which is the consequence of the love of God before the foundation of the world. The purpose of God respecting those whom he has chosen, is immutable, and not like the purposes of men subject to change. The Scriptures declare, that "the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever; the thoughts of his heart to all generations." Psalms xxxiii. 11. "The foundation of the Lord," that is, his decree, "standeth sure, having this seal. The Lord knoweth them that are his." Our Saviour said to his Father, concerning his disciples, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me. Those that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none is lost but the son of perdition." John xvii. 6-12. That Judas was not properly an exception is manifest from the words immediately subjoined, "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled," which import that his perdition was foreknown and predetermined. Again, the apostle, Rom. viii. 30, in speaking of the close connexion established between election and final salvation, describes the immutability of the decree by a process, all the steps of which are inseparably conjoined. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

From what has been advanced on the subject of election, it appears that God has chosen some to enjoy eternal salvation before the foundation of the world; that he was not influenced by the foresight of their good qualifications, and that his purpose is unchangeable, so that those whom he has chosen shall never perish.

A question may be asked here: Can a person be assured of his election to eternal life? I reply, that no man can read his own name, or that of another, in the Book of Life. We cannot be assured of our election till evidence be exhibited in our personal character and life. An Apostle points out the only means by which this important point can be ascertained, when he exhorts Christians to "give all diligence to make your call-

ing and election sure;" that is, to ascertain that we have been converted to God; and thus our election will be sure, or manifest to ourselves. 2 Pet. i. 10.

As no man can know his election till he believes, it follows, that the decree ought to have no effect upon his conduct in reference to the Gospel. The rule of our duty is the word of God. God in his word has not told us whom he hath chosen to salvation; but he has told us, that all to whom the Gospel is preached should believe, and that every man who does believe shall be saved.

Having considered the doctrine of election, I go on to speak of that of reprobation.

To reprobate is to disapprove, or to reject; and the term is used to express that act of God, by which he rejected some, while he chose others. Some prefer using the word preterition as a softer term. They conceive that there was no positive act of God in reference to those who were left in their sins, but that he merely passed them by. But suppose we say he passed them by, still this was an act of the divine will with respect to the reprobate as well as the elect. When a person, out of many objects which are presented to him, makes a selection, he as positively rejects some as he chooses others.

There are many passages of Scripture in which the doctrine is taught: we read of some whose names are "not written in the Book of Life;" Rev. xiii. 8; who are vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; Rom. ix. 22; who "stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed." 1 Pet. ii. 8.

In proof of this doctrine, the ninth and eleventh chapters of the Epistle to the Romans is referred to, as teaching that some are ordained to death, and that others are ordained to life.

If we inquire into the reason why God passed over some in his eternal decree, while he extended mercy to others, we must content ourselves with the words of our Lord: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Matt. xi. 26.

The doctrine of the Divine decrees relative to the final destination of men, is calculated to inspire sentiments of rever-

ence and gratitude to God. It exhibits him in the august character of the Supreme Lord of the universe, "who doth his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." It affords an illustration of the exceeding riches of his grace, while it gives a solemn and impressive view of his justice and severity.

I shall conclude by noticing some of the objections which are made against the doctrine of predestination.

It is objected that the doctrine of election makes God a respecter of persons. A respecter of persons is one who confers favours upon some, and withholds them from others equally deserving; but not he, who, where none has a claim upon him, disposes of his gifts in the free exercise of his power over them, which naturally belongs to him. How, then, can God be a respecter of persons? May he not do what he will with his own? The objection is founded on a mistake respecting the meaning of the phrase, "respecter of persons," in Acts x. 34, 35. It simply signifies, as appears from the context where the phrase is used, that God will not respect the outward condition or circumstances of men. He will not bestow his favours upon this one, because he is a Jew, and neglect that one, because he is a Gentile.

Another objection is, this doctrine leads to licentiousness, and supersedes the use of means. If my final state, says the objector, is fixed by an eternal decree, I cannot alter it, and therefore I may live as I please. If I am elected, I shall be saved, without giving myself any concern about it; and if I have not been elected, all my efforts to obtain eternal life will prove unavailing.

This is a very silly objection. The predestination to which this objection would be applicable, is an absolute pre-appointment of an end, without any regard to the means. But this is not the predestination, of which we are speaking, contained in the Scriptures. The predestination taught in the Bible, is a purpose which embraces means and ends. If God has chosen some to eternal life, he has chosen them to it through faith and holiness, as the means of salvation; if he has appointed other

persons to wrath, his sentence is founded on their impenitence and unbelief. The means are an essential part of the decree, and are as necessary as the end. To say that the means are unnecessary, would be just as reasonable as to maintain, that a man who has been assured that, by the use of a certain medicine, his life will be prolonged, may justly take occasion, from this assurance, to neglect the medicine, and, at the same time, expect to live.

Again, it is objected, that the doctrine of predestination is inconsistent with the invitation of the Gospel; for how could God offer salvation to men, if he had excluded them from it by an immutable decree? and how could he earnestly entreat them to believe, although he had determined to withhold his effectual grace? We acknowledge there is some difficulty in answering this objection, but we meet with the same difficulty, if we simply admit the prescience of future events, to the rejection of absolute decrees; for how, it may be asked, can God, in sincerity, invite, beseech, and expostulate with men, evidently with a design to effect a change in their sentiments, although he knows, most certainly, beforehand, that they never will change? Let us suspect our views of the subject, rather than suspect the sincerity of God. We may err, because the subject is mysterious, but we cannot be deceived, because God is sincere. He has commanded that the Gospel should be preached to every creature, and he is willing that all men should be saved. All are commanded to believe, and all are encouraged by the promise of salvation. The reason why men are not saved, notwithstanding the calls and invitations of the Gospel, is, because they will not. "Ye will not," said the Saviour to the Jews, "come unto me that ye may have life." "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!" The will of man is entirely perverse, and opposed to the will of God. On this account no man ever would be saved, were it not for the special, free, and unmerited grace of God, which makes his people willing in a day of his power.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ON CREATION.

AFTER having considered the decrees of God, we are naturally led to speak of their execution in his works.

The subject of Creation first claims our attention. There have been different opinions concerning the creation of all things.

The Epicureans taught that the world came into existence by mere chance; and the Stoics, that it existed from all eternity. The absurdity of these opinions was shown in the discourse on the being of God. That the universe is not eternal, but that it had a beginning, is evident from the following arguments:—

To suppose the universe to be eternal, is to suppose it to be self-existent; but as matter is inert, passive, divisible, and subject to perpetual change, how can it be self-existent? and if self-existent, must it not necessarily exist? And if it exists necessarily everywhere, as will follow upon this supposition, it must have filled every portion of space, and have been infinitely extended. But this is absurd, and contrary to fact. Again: If matter exists necessarily, it must exist either in a state of motion or in a state of rest, as necessity will determine every part to be in the same state. It would be impossible that (as is actually the case) one part of it should be in motion and another at rest. This would be contrary to the actual state in which matter appears, as we all know by observation.

The nature of time is another argument against the eternity of the universe. Time is a succession of moments. We can conceive time to commence at any given period, and to run on, ad infinitum; but we cannot conceive it to be actually infinite. An infinite duration can never be made up of finite parts; because as each of those parts has an end, the sum which they compose must also have an end. As it is impos-

sible that an infinite succession of moments can be past, it is impossible that the universe can have existed from eternity.

The recent date of authentic history is another argument against the eternity of the world. No credible history reaches farther back than the period which Moses has assigned for the creation.

Herodotus flourished about 500 years before the Christian era; previous to his time, profane history has nothing to relate but fables and rumours. How does it happen that not a hint has come down to us of innumerable former generations, and of their civilization, and of the arts and sciences! The recent date of authentic history, the recent origin of nations, and the late invention of arts, all concur to show that only a few thousand years have elapsed since our earth and its inhabitants came into existence.

God created all things out of nothing. For if God existed from eternity, there were no materials from which he could make anything, until he brought them into existence. No man that believes the power of God to be unlimited, that he can do all things possible, which do not involve a contradiction, can for a moment doubt that he can produce something out of nothing. That all things were made out of nothing seems to be intimated in the following passage. Heb. xi. 3. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

Moses informs us that God created all things in the space of six days. God could, with equal ease, have created everything in a moment; but for wise reasons, no doubt, though they may be unknown to us, he completed the work of creation in six days. One reason may have been that the perfections which are manifested by his works might the more distinctly appear to his rational creatures, and be contemplated by them. And another reason probably was, that he might set us an example to work six days and rest on the seventh.

On the first day "God created the heaven and the earth," that is, the substance of the heavens and the substance of the

earth, of which he afterwards formed the works of creation. Light was likewise created on the first day. On the second the atmosphere was formed. On the third the water was collected in the seas and lakes, and the dry land appeared, which was immediately clothed with grass, and herbs, and trees. On the fourth the sun, and moon, and stars were made, or became visible. On the fifth the waters and the air were replenished with inhabitants. On the sixth terrestrial animals were produced, and man, last of all, was created to have dominion over this lower world.

A question may be asked here : If the sun is the great fountain of light, how could light exist already on the first day prior to the sun, which we are told was created on the fourth day ? In answer to this objection, I observe that it is founded upon the supposition that we know, what we certainly do not know, that light is necessarily dependent upon the sun. The sun, although light come principally from him to us, is not the only source from which it flows. Light is produced by the ignition of combustible substances, by percussion or friction ; and there are phosphoric light, and electric light, and the light of the Aurora Borealis.

As there is light at the present time without the sun, may there not have been light without him in the beginning ?

Philosophers are divided in their opinion, whether light proceeds from the body of the sun, or from his atmosphere. We know not indeed what light is, although we are acquainted with its laws and properties. It is probable that the matter of which the sun consists was created on the first day ; but the collection of light in him, as its grand repository, was on the fourth day. Moses informs us that God at first created the heaven as well as the earth, and that the six days were employed merely in arranging them in their present form.

In relation to the time when God created the world, there have been different opinions, and various calculations. The Hebrew copy of the Bible dates the creation of the world 3944 years before the Christian era. The Samaritan Bible, again, fixes the era of the creation 4305 years before the birth of

Christ. And the Greek translation, or the Septuagint version of the Bible, gives 5270 as the number of years which intervened between these two periods. Some ingenious men, by comparing the various dates in the Sacred Writings, by examining how these have come to disagree, and to be diversified in different copies, have endeavoured to reconcile the most authentic Profane with Sacred chronology, and formed schemes of chronology. The system which is most generally received is that of Archbishop Usher, who, according to the Hebrew chronology, maintains that the creation took place four thousand and four years before the birth of Christ, differing from the Septuagint nearly two thousand years. There can be little doubt which of these computations should be preferred. The original, when all the copies agree, is surely higher authority than a translation. Some modern geologists maintain that the world is much older; they suppose that the observations which have been made upon the structure of the earth contradict the Mosaic account, and prove that it must have been created at a more distant period, if created at all; and that it must have undergone many revolutions prior to what we call the beginning. Their theories are different: what one builds up another destroys.

The vain reasonings of modern geologists may be made manifest, and the foundation of their theories easily overturned. For instance, they talk of primitive formations, and ascribe the origin of rocks to precipitation and crystallization. Looking at a piece of granite from the mountains, they point out the characters of aqueous or igneous fusion, and say that it was formed by the agency of water or fire, carried on through a long process, which it required ages to complete. But why may we not suppose that their author anticipated their operation, and immediately created substances of such texture or composition as would have resulted from them in the natural order? Why may we not suppose that he made rocks at first, such as they would have been made by precipitation and crystallization? No geologist will deny this, unless he be an atheist. That there was a first man, we all admit except the atheist. Now,

if we were in possession of one of his bones, we should find that in all respects it resembled the bones of his posterity; and, reasoning according to the theories of geologists, we should conclude that at first its fibres were soft, that they gradually became cartilage, and last of all acquired the hardness of their perfect state. But we should reason falsely, because that bone was made solid and firm in a moment. If we saw one of the first trees, we should perceive no difference between it and a tree of more recent date. On being cut across, it would exhibit the same folds or circles, indicating the growth of successive years, and increasing in hardness as they were nearer to the centre. But did that tree originally spring from a seed, did it require many years to bring it to maturity, or was it the work of an instant? Thus we see how easily all the geological systems which represent second causes as immediately concerned in the formation of the earth may be overturned.

Respecting the season of the year when the world was created, men have been divided in opinion. Some have imagined that it was in the spring of the year, when plants and trees are blooming; others, that it was created in autumn, because the fruits of the earth are then ripe, and because the civil year of the Jews, as well as their sabbatical year, and the year of jubilee, commenced at this time. We cannot say with any certainty, that the world was created in the spring or in autumn. Autumn and spring are local terms, which vary in their application to different countries, according to their geographical situation. Harvest is beginning in some countries, when the seed-time is over in others; and hence, unless we know the place of Paradise, to say that the world was created in this or the other season of the year, gives no information at all with respect to the time when it was made.

The design of God in creating all things, was his own glory, or the manifestation of his wisdom, power, and goodness, and the happiness of his creatures. "The Lord hath made all things for himself." Prov. xvi. 4. Of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Rom. xi. 36.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ON ANGELS.

IN this Chapter, we shall treat of the doctrine of the Scriptures respecting angels—that order of higher intelligences, who occupy a middle space between man and the Deity.

The term angel, according to the original Hebrew and Greek, מַלְאָךְ, and ἀγγελος, signifies a messenger. It is used and applied in different significations. It signifies any human messenger or agent. Thus David sent messengers, angels, to Jabesh Gilead. The word is sometimes applied to ministers of the Gospel. The ministers or bishops of the seven churches of Asia are called angels. Rev. ii. 7. The Priests of the Old Testament are called the messengers, angels of the Lord. Mal. ii. 7. The term is applied frequently, in the Bible, by way of evidence, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, Gen. xxii. 11, The angels of the Lord called to Abraham. Jesus Christ was pleased to anticipate his incarnation, by appearing to the saints, under the old dispensation, in a human form, in order to confirm them in their belief of his coming. He is, the angel of the Lord; the angel of the covenant. But, in its proper and usual sense, the term angel is used to describe those spiritual and incorporeal beings, who occupy a middle space between God and man.

That there are such beings as those we call angels, it might seem impossible for any person to deny, who has read the Scriptures; yet Luke informs us, Acts xxiii. 8, That the Sadducees, while they acknowledged the inspiration of the Scriptures, denied the existence of angels. It is supposed, they explained all the passages in which angels are mentioned, in a figurative sense; or, that they understood them to be temporary appearances, caused by the power of God, which vanished as soon as the purpose intended by them was accomplished. In modern times, we find some, with the Bible in their hand, deny the existence of angels. With such men it is in vain to reason.

We might as well contend with a fool, who denies that the sun is shining at mid-day.

The fact of the existence of angels, is a matter of pure revelation; still, there is nothing unphilosophical in the doctrine. The light of nature, so far from teaching anything to the contrary, affords a strong presumption in favour of the existence of a higher order of beings. In all the creatures of God we behold a nice and perceptible gradation—a rising from smaller to greater—from the minutest insect that crawls on the ground, or flutters in the breeze, to man, the head and lord of this lower world. But what reason have we to believe that the gradation stops here? On the contrary, the analogy of God's works affords us strong presumption that the gradation does not stop with man; but, as there are beings who are lower, so, in all probability, there are beings of a higher grade—of a more exalted place and sphere in the creation.

The existence of angels has, accordingly, been the popular and generally received opinion of all nations, even of the Heathen. So far did they carry their superstition upon this point, that there was hardly a grove or mountain, a river or stream, but had its tutelary or presiding god or angel.

With regard to the precise time of the creation of angels, the sacred Scriptures afford us no particular information. The most probable and generally received opinion is, that they were created on one of the six days in which Moses tells us "God made the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them." They were probably created on the first day, or, at any rate, not later than the third day, for on that day, when the foundations of the earth were laid, Job informs us, "The morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy." Job xxxviii. 7.

Others suppose they were created at some period prior to the creation of the world. According to their conception of things, it would be unreasonable to believe that God should have remained inactive and solitary, until within the six thousand years, the comparatively short space of time our earth has been standing. But thus to reason, we conceive, is to

darken counsel with words. However far back we go before creation, the same difficulty occurs; there was still an infinity of time, in which God could not possibly be associated with any creature.

Concerning the angels in general, the Scriptures teach us that they are pure and disembodied spirits. "He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flaming fire." Ps. civ. 4. A spirit is a being that has not flesh and blood, as Christ himself has taught us. Luke xxiv. 39. Angels, indeed, are represented to have assumed at times human forms; but it is evident that they did not belong to them, but were merely assumed for a time and purpose. In their proper nature, they are pure disembodied spirits, disconnected with anything material or tangible. They come, therefore, nearest to God, whom we are taught to regard and worship as "a spirit." They are the highest grade or order of beings with which we are acquainted; and vastly superior to man. Man has, indeed, an immaterial and immortal soul, but that soul is linked to a material and corruptible body; but the angels, as pure spirits, are immortal, as our Saviour teaches us in Luke xx. 30. Their immortality is, however, not the natural consequence of their immateriality, but of the will of God.

Good angels are endowed with a high degree of wisdom and knowledge. Thus, when the woman of Tekoah would express the superior knowledge and wisdom of David, she compared him to an angel. 2 Sam. xiv. 17, 20. John, in his revelation, describes them as being "full of eyes within;" that is, full of perception, thought, intellect, and consciousness. Their nature, as pure spirits, qualifies them without weariness or relaxation to bend their thoughts with the greatest ardour and intensity to the contemplation of God's works, particularly the great work of redemption; and as they have been since their creation thus employed, their knowledge by this time must be surprisingly great. But though their knowledge is vastly superior to man's, it is yet finite and limited. Speaking of the day of Judgment, Christ says, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels in heaven."

Good angels are represented as being of astonishing activity. The number of wings which the Seraphim and Cherubim are said to possess, are designed symbolically to teach us the astonishing activity and swiftness with which they can move from place to place. Light is said to fly with the astonishing velocity of 200,000 miles in a second of time. It comes from the sun to our earth, a distance of 95 million of miles, in $8\frac{1}{4}$ minutes, a velocity 450 times greater than a cannon ball, and yet inconceivably greater is the swiftness of angels.

In the book of Daniel we read, that as soon as Daniel began his supplication, recorded in the 9th chapter, the command is given, and the angel Gabriel, being caused to fly swiftly, touched him while he was yet praying, about the time of the evening oblation.

Angels are represented to us as being very powerful. They excel in strength, Ps. ciii. 20, and are called "mighty angels." 2 Thess. i. 7. Of their great power, many instances are given. An angel of the Lord in three days destroyed 70,000 of the children of Israel, on account of David's sin in numbering the people. And on another occasion, an angel of the Lord slew, in a single night, of the army of the boasting king of Assyria, 150,000. It has, indeed, been supposed that the instrument was the hot wind which is known in the East, and causes sudden death; and that it is figuratively called the angel of the Lord, because it was sent by him. But there is no occasion for this attempt to strip the narrative of what would be called its practical machinery, and to render it as agreeable as possible to the principles of philosophy, by bringing to view only natural causes. There is the same reason for believing that a real angel was concerned in this, as in any other case where angels are mentioned; and whether his purpose was effected by corrupted air or by lightning, it was under his management and direction. In Revelations, angels are represented as holding the four winds of heaven, and executing judgments utterly beyond the reach of any human power.

The angels are very numerous. They are called, "a host," "an immense multitude." Gen. xxxii. 2. Paul calls them

“an innumerable company.” Heb. xii. 20. “The chariots of the Lord are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels.” Ps. lxxviii. 17. Their number, in Revelations v. 11, is said to be “ten thousand times ten thousands of thousands.” Our Saviour on a certain occasion said that if necessary he could call twelve legions to his assistance: which, reckoning 5000 to a legion, would be 60,000.

The angels are holy and happy beings. They had once their day of temptation and trial, but they remained firm in their obedience, and retained their innocence; hence, they are happy as their exalted nature will admit. “In heaven,” says Christ, “the angels do always behold the face of my Father in heaven.” Matt. xviii. 10. They are called “holy angels,” Matt. xxv. 31. When they contemplate the holiness of the Divine Nature, they bow with reverence and humility, and cry, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.” Isaiah vi. 3.

As it regards the external economy of those glorious spirits, we know very little; but from some passages in Scripture it has been inferred that there are different ranks and degrees among them, and different names are given to them: cherubim, seraphim, thrones, dominions, principalities and powers, angels and archangel in the singular number. But, we cannot tell what is the reason of these names; whether they are expressive of a difference of rank or of office, or originate in some other cause; or why it is that one is called a cherub and another a seraph. These different names may be used simply to denote the dignity and power of angelical beings, as they are expressive of the highest degrees of honour and authority among men.

It has been a subject of dispute, whether the title, archangel, in Jude, 9th verse, is descriptive of a created angel, or is a designation of our Lord Jesus Christ. The title, archangel, cannot, I think, be ascribed to our Saviour, for the archangel seems to be plainly distinguished from the Saviour in the following words: “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump

of God." 1 Thess. iv. 16. If the voice of the archangel means the voice of Christ himself, why is it spoken of as the voice of a different being? Besides, in the tenth chapter of Daniel, Michael, who is elsewhere called the archangel, is said to be "one of the chief princes," Dan. x. 13, a title which could not with propriety be given to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is not one of the angels, but above them all, the head of all principality and power.

More particularly concerning the good angels, the Scriptures teach us, that they are continually and actively employed. God employs them in the administration of the affairs of providence. This was represented to Jacob in a dream, when he saw "a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reaching to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending upon it." Gen. xxviii. 12. Angels were employed in the divine dispensation towards the Israelites, and particularly while they were journeying in the wilderness. Exodus xxxii. 34; xxxiii. 14. They were employed in the most solemn transaction in the wilderness — the promulgation of the law. It is called, in one place, "the word spoken by angels," Heb. xi. 2, and, in another, is said to have been received "by the disposition of angels," or "by the ministration of angels," or "amidst ranks of angels." Acts vii. 53. They are employed to execute divine judgments upon the enemies of the saints. We have an instance in the fate of the Assyrian army, which had invaded Judea; and another recorded in Acts xii. 23; the miserable end of Herod, the persecutor, who was smitten by an angel. In the revelation of John, angels are represented as the agents, in the terrible revolutions by which the wicked will be punished, and the church will be delivered.

Angels are employed in continually praising and glorifying God. Covering their faces with their wings, they cry; Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. Rev. iv. 8; v. 11. At the birth of Christ, when that event was announced to the shepherds, the multitude of the heavenly host sang "praises to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will towards men."

A noted part of their employment consisted in ministering to the Lord Jesus Christ, while on earth. They announced his birth on several occasions, and to different individuals; they were present with him in his temptation in the wilderness, and his agony in the garden; at his resurrection, and ascension into heaven. And as they ministered to Christ, who is the Head, so do they also to his people, who are his members. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Heb. i. 14. They take a deep interest in everything that relates to the Church of Christ, and his people. The repentance of one sinner occasions among them new joy. Luke xv. 10. They accompany and watch over the believer's path through life; for it is written; "he shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." Psalm xci. 11. They stand by him in his spiritual conflict, and rescue him from the hands of his enemies, for it is also recorded; "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and he delivereth them;" they follow him even to the close of life, hover round his dying pillow, and bear his departing spirit, on their wings, to Paradise. Thus when Lazarus, the poor man, died, he was "carried by angels to Abraham's bosom." At the last day, when Christ shall appear in his glory, "The saints will be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." 1 Thess. iv. 17. At the great harvest of the world, they will gather the wheat into the garner; Matt. xiii. 39; and in Matt. xxiv. 31, we are told; "He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds; from one end of heaven to the other."

When we are considering the employment, or the ministry of angels, the question naturally occurs, whether there are guardian angels, and whether every individual has his guardian angel, who attends him during the whole course of his life? In reply to this question, we observe, that the Scriptures do not mention the fact in express terms, they only say, "He shall give his angels charge over thee;" representing the care of the saints, in general terms. The argument in favour of this

opinion, that every individual has his guardian angel, is founded on the words of the disciples recorded in Acts xii. 15. They were praying for the deliverance of Peter, on the night before his expected execution; when the servant affirmed that it was Peter who was knocking at the gate, they exclaimed, "it is his angel;" they could not believe that it was the apostle himself. From these words we learn that these disciples, being Jews, believed that there were guardian angels; but as we do not know that any of them were inspired men, we are not bound to adopt their sentiments, unless they be supported by a higher authority. The opinion, however, in itself, may be considered as a harmless one. In the mean time, let us be thankful for the care of God exercised toward us, by the ministry of angels, and for the honour conferred upon us for having such guardians; while we know ourselves to be safe under their protection, let us at all times act with caution and reverence, in the presence of witnesses so august and holy.

The Scriptures teach us that there are not only good, but also evil angels — active in propagating sin and misery among the human race, and who are doomed to dwell in the regions of darkness and sorrow. These were created, and once existed, in a state of innocence and purity. "But being created in honour, they abode not." How long it was after their creation that they sinned, and fell off from God, the Scriptures do not say, but it was probably only a short time. In what manner, also, it was possible for sin to enter into the minds of beings perfectly pure, we are not able to explain; it is sufficient for us to know that the fact has actually occurred. Concerning the nature of the first sin of the angels, there are different opinions. Some suppose it to have been envy at the superiority of other angels, or of man, created in the image of God. Others, with greater probability, suppose the first sin of the fallen angels to have been pride; and this opinion is confirmed by the language of Paul, 1 Tim. iii. 6, where he says; "not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the Devil." Looking upon themselves with complacency, and admiring their own excellencies, they lost their humility — forgot their depen-

dence upon their Creator, and became filled with vain and arrogant aspirations to take his place. Milton, the poet, in his "Paradise Lost," has supposed that their pride was excited by a command to all the heavenly powers to do homage to the Son of God, and that Satan, who was higher than the rest,

"could not bear,
Through pride, that sight, and thought himself impaired."

The fallen angels are very numerous; but there is one who is their head, and occupies a pre-eminency above the rest. He is called Satan, or the adversary; the Devil, or the accuser; Apollyon, or the destroyer; the Old Dragon, or serpent—the prince and god of this world.

Angels were not placed under a federal head, like the human race. As they were all created at once, each one was to stand or fall according to his personal conduct; by example and counsel, one might excite the other to good or evil. It is probable that one angel, or a few, admitted sin into their thoughts and affections, and exerted their influence with success upon others. It is impossible to tell how many angels were engaged in this revolt. They are said to be many; but nothing is said about their number.

A great change was effected in the nature of the angels by their fall, not in their nature or essence, as spirits, but as to their intellectual and moral qualities. The intellectual powers of the fallen angels have, no doubt, like man, when he fell, been blighted—their understandings are obscured and perverted by their passions. Their moral qualities have undergone a total change; they have lost their original holiness, and sin is now quite natural to them. Sin rages in them unrestrained; every malignant and furious passion boils within them, and they are filled with malice against God and his government.

The existence of such beings as fallen angels has been denied by many; and all that is said concerning them, in Scripture, has been explained in a figurative sense. It has been objected, that the common notion of a Devil, having other wicked spirits under him, is a modification of the doctrine of two principles,

which was held by some of the eastern nations, and was adopted by the Gnostics and Manichees. It appears, to some men, to be inconsistent with just ideas of the Almighty power, and moral character of God, to suppose that there are malignant spirits continually employed in opposing his design, and seducing his creatures. But it is no more repugnant to the honour of God, that there should be invisible agents, who oppose his designs, than that the same thing should be done by embodied spirits, or by men, who daily trample upon his laws; or that we should be tempted by them, than that we should solicit one another to sin. The doctrine of the New Testament, concerning the Devil and his angels, is very different from that of the ancient Persians, or of those sects who believed in a good and evil principle; the evil carrying on perpetual war against the good. The Devil is not self-existent, or exempt from the authority of God, but, as one of his creatures, is dependent upon him; and although he is permitted to live and to act according to his depraved inclinations, is under the constant restraint of divine power. The angels who sinned were expelled from heaven, and cast down to hell, 2 Pet. ii. 4, and delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.

That there is a subordination among the angels of darkness, appears from such expressions as these: "the Devil and his angels," and "the prince of the devils." Among the fallen angels, there is but one, *διαβολος*, which is rendered devil in our version, but, properly, signifies an accuser; other impure spirits are called demons. The words *δαιμων*, and *δαιμονιον*, were used by the Greeks to designate an order of beings who were accounted divine, but inferior to the higher gods, and were the objects of religious worship. To this order belonged the souls of heroes and legislators, and other great men, who were deified after their death. Of the demons of the Heathen, some were good and some were bad; but, in their writings, the word generally occurs in a favourable sense. In the New Testament it is used in a bad sense; and in all those cases, at least, which relate to the spirits associated with the Devil, and are under his direction.

The power of evil spirits has, in many cases, extended not merely to the souls, but also to the bodies of men. Thus Satan obtained permission to afflict Job, not only in his external circumstances, but also in his body. In the days of Christ, the cases were numerous; of persons whose bodies were possessed by demons, or evil spirits. Nor were these cases mere diseases and distempers of the bodies of men; they were real possessions. In Luke iv. 33-36, 41, they are particularly distinguished from the diseased. Christ speaks, on various occasions, to these evil spirits, as distinct from the persons possessed by them. He commands them, and asks them questions, and receives answers from them; or suffers them not to speak. We have several instances recorded relative to the terrible preternatural effects which they had upon the possessed, and of the manner of Christ's invoking them — particularly their requesting and obtaining permission to enter the herd of swine, Matt. viii. 31, 32, and precipitating them into the sea. All these circumstances cannot be accounted for by any distemper whatever. It is no reasonable objection that we do not read of such frequent possessions before, or since the appearance of Christ. It appears, indeed, to have been ordered by a special providence, that they should have been permitted to have then been more common, in order that He who came to destroy the works of the Devil, might the more remarkably and visibly triumph over him. In the second century of the Christian era, the apologist for the persecuted believers, appealed to their ejection, as a proof of the divine origin of their religion. Hence, it is evident that the demoniacs were not merely insane, lunatic or epileptic patients, but persons really and truly vexed and convulsed by unclean demons.

That the fallen angels exercise power over the minds of men, is evident from the seduction of our first parents, and from many facts and declarations and admonitions in Scripture. The Scriptures teach us plainly that evil spirits are employed in tempting men to sin. The Devil is called "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." Eph. ii. 2. He is represented as a roaring lion, going about and seeking whom

he may devour. 1 Pet. v. 8. The wicked are said to be "of their father the Devil," John viii. 44, and to do his works; and it is affirmed, that "he who committeth sin is of the Devil." 1 John iii. 4. It was Satan who tempted Judas to betray his master, John xiii. 2, and put it into the heart of Ananias and Sapphira, to agree together to lie to the Holy Ghost. Acts v. 3. Our Lord told his disciples, that Satan had desired to have them, that he might sift them as wheat. Luke xxii. 31.

These, and many other passages, fully prove that fallen angels are employed in endeavouring to draw men into sin, and justify us in believing their agency, although we cannot explain it. There are two extremes, which, when speaking upon this subject, we ought to be cautious to avoid. The first extreme is that of those who ascribe everything that is sinful in man to Satan; the other extreme is that of denying his agency altogether. The Scriptures take middle ground: while they teach that the sources of all wickedness lie in the depravity and deceitfulness of the human heart, and that no being can compel man to sin, they at the same time inform us, that men's evil propensities and appetites are excited and drawn forth into action by an invisible tempter. But how, the mode and manner in which this is done, or how one spirit operates on another, is a mystery we cannot explain. Our duty is to "watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation; and to put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil." Ephesians vi. 11-18.

CHAPTER XXX.

MAN IN HIS STATE OF INNOCENCE.

GOD having created heaven and earth, the sea and all things therein, created man on the sixth day. His creation was delayed till that time, that the earth might be prepared for his reception. Moses introduces the account of the origin of the human race in the following terms: "God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them." Gen. i. 26, 27. It is very remarkable, that in the creation of man, the plural pronoun is used, instead of the singular. God said not, "Let *me* make man," but, "Let *us* make man after *our* own image." Different methods have been adopted to account for this unusual mode of expression. Some say, that he spoke to the angels, and called upon them to assist him in the creation of man. This opinion is absurd. Did God need the assistance of angels? and what assistance could they give him? The Scriptures declare that we have all one Father, and that one God created us, and not many creators, as would follow, if the angels co-operated in the production of the noblest work of God. Mal. ii. 10. Others maintain, that God spake in the style which is used by kings, to signify their dignity, and that they are the representatives of the people over whom they reign. But it ought to be considered that this style is of modern date, and was altogether unknown in ancient times. The most natural and satisfactory account of the rise of the plural word, on this occasion, is to suppose a reference to a plurality of persons in the Godhead, intimating that all the divine persons were concerned in the creation of man.

God created the body of man of dust, or earth, to teach him humility. When the body was fashioned, he "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Gen. ii. 7. These two constituent parts of human nature were joined together by an invisible and mysterious tie. Thus united, they constitute one individual; so that by the will of God, the soul moves the body, and the body affects the soul by the organs of sense, and all its modifications. When Adam had been created, there was not found "a help meet for him." To supply this want, "the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof." Gen. ii. 21, 22.—And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.—23, 24. The reason why God chose this mode of making the woman, instead of forming her also out of the dust, seems to have been, to constitute the closest conjunction between her and Adam; to be an image of the intimacy of the conjugal relation; and to derive the whole human race from one common stock, or to make them literally of one blood.

Our first parents were created in the image, or after the likeness of God. It is almost unnecessary to remark, that it did not consist in his external form; because God being a spirit, and having no bodily parts, any configuration of matter could not constitute the impress of his image. It has been supposed by some, that the image of God in which man was created, consisted in part in the nature of the soul. The soul is indeed a spiritual substance, which can subsist by itself, independent of matter; herein the soul resembles the divine nature, which is spiritual. The soul is also immortal; in this respect, also, does man resemble his Creator.

But though some make the preceding resemblances a part of the image of God in which man was originally created; yet others doubt whether there is any reference to them in the account which Moses gives of the creation of man in the image of God.

I proceed therefore to observe, that the image of God prin-

cially and properly consisted in the qualities of the soul which were similar to the perfections of his Maker. It consisted in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. This appears from the words of an Apostle, who, addressing Christians on the subject of their restoration to the state from which Adam fell, says, "Ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him;" Col. iii. 10. And again, "Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

In the first place we say, that the image of God consisted in *knowledge*. In speaking upon this subject, there are two extremes which should be avoided. We must not suppose that Adam was a child in understanding, as some have represented him; nor must we imagine that it equalled that of the angels. The truth lies between these extremes. He was neither so ignorant as some suppose him to have been, nor so enlightened as others have represented him.

He was endowed with all that knowledge which was necessary in his circumstances when he was first created: all that was necessary to him as an intelligent and moral agent. The knowledge which chiefly distinguished him in his original state, was the knowledge of God and his will, and of every thing which it behoved him to know, in order to fulfil the end of his creation. He knew himself; he knew his relations to his Maker; he knew the duty which he owed to him; he knew what he had to fear from sin, and what to hope from obedience. But how did he obtain this knowledge? Not by observation, inquiry and reflection; but by immediate inspiration, from the first moment of his existence.

Another question may be asked, whether our primitive parents were endowed at once with the knowledge of language, or were left to form a language for themselves? The first opinion seems to be the most correct, most rational and analogous to other parts of the divine procedure; we believe, that he who infused knowledge into the mind of Adam, taught him how to express it in articulate sounds.

Secondly, another feature of the divine image consisted in

righteousness, or in the rectitude of his will; that is, he was fully disposed to the performance of his duty, or to act according to the light which shone in his mind. His will was perfectly conformed to the divine will. No perversity, obstinacy, or inclination to evil, had place in his will. His delight was to do the will of God, and to render to every one his righteous due. He chose to act towards the inferior creation that which was perfectly right, and to exercise the dominion with which he was invested, with moderation. And with respect to the things of this world, he chose to seek, possess, and use them, not as a supreme good; but as means by which we are led to God, and to glorify him.

Thirdly, the image of God in man consisted in *holiness*. His affections were pure and holy, and were placed upon their proper objects. Man in his primitive state loved God supremely, and other beings in so far as he was acquainted with them, and saw that they manifested the divine image. He loved the law of God, and there was no enmity in his heart against it. He was perfectly satisfied with the lot assigned to him by his Creator, placing entire confidence in his providence. His body he kept in proper subjection to the soul, and rendered it an instrument of righteousness unto God. Such was the character of man in his primitive state. He was created in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.

He was invested with dominion over the inferior creation upon earth, so that all things were placed in a state of subjection to him. Some suppose that this dominion made a part of the image of God, inasmuch as it was a shadow of the authority and power of the Creator over the man. Others confine the image of God to knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, and suppose that dominion made no part of it; but that man was invested with dominion in consequence of his bearing the image of God, which fitted him to govern the world. This much we know most certainly, that dominion over all the inferior creatures was given to man at his creation, that he was constituted lord of this world, and had a right to use and dispose of the inferior creatures for his comfort, but not to abuse them. No

animal dared to rise up against him, or to injure him, but all submitted to his authority. He was created after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; and was invested with dominion over the inferior creation.

Man being created after the image of God was perfectly happy, and enjoyed all the felicity which was suitable to his nature and his circumstances. He knew nothing of disease and pain. All the objects around him were conducive to his happiness, and calculated to delight his senses. The place in which he was situated, the garden of Eden, where nature appeared in all her loveliness, and in which grew every tree that was pleasant to the sight, and good for food, contributed to make him happy. Man in his original state had everything his wants demanded, in abundance. As he had no present want, he felt no anxiety respecting the future, but unconscious of guilt, he looked up with confident expectation to the goodness of his Maker. But it was not merely from external objects that his happiness was chiefly derived; but from the intimate communion and fellowship with God which he enjoyed. He was happy in the enjoyment of God; happy in a sense of his love and friendship. There was nothing to disturb and interrupt this happiness. All was calm within, all was peaceful without. He was happy now; and he would have been happy always, if he had continued to perform the easy service which was enjoined upon him. The Scriptures have not informed us how long our first parents retained their innocence. We have no reason to think that the period of human innocence was of long duration; but we have also no reason to believe that it lasted only for a few hours.

God, after he had finished his work, pronounced it to be good, because sin had not yet entered to mar its beauty, and disturb its order. The heavens declared his glory, and the earth showed forth his praise. All animate and inanimate nature: the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea, the trees and herbs, displayed his power, wisdom, and goodness; and man, placed at the head of creation, was enlightened by reason, and adorned with every moral excellence. What a lovely, what a beautiful sight.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ON PROVIDENCE.

THE providence of God is the care which God takes of all things, to uphold and govern them, and to direct them to the ends which he has purposed to accomplish by them.

The arguments for divine providence are drawn from reason, and fully supported by Scripture. First, from the being of God. If there is a Supreme Being, who created the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all things therein; it is reasonable to believe that he must uphold and govern all things. Hence we find, that almost all nations concur in the belief of a superintending providence. It is true, they were divided in their sentiments concerning this doctrine. Some denied the fact; but the better and more reasonable always concurred in the belief of providence. Indeed, none but an atheist, who imagines that the world came into existence by mere chance, or existed from eternity, will deny that God governs the universe.

Secondly, the providence of God is evident from the perfections of God, his knowledge and power; his wisdom, goodness and justice. God is an omniscient being—he knows all things; the minutest objects are as well known to Him, as the greatest, and the most secret actions, as well as those which are performed openly. There is nothing hid from Him, for he is everywhere present, and surveys the immense field of creation with a glance. God is almighty, his power, like his knowledge, is unlimited, and fully adequate to all the purposes of his government; “he can do all things in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.” God is all-wise; he knows how to govern and regulate the affairs of the world, and how to dispose them and direct them in such a manner as to accomplish those ends which will promote his glory, and the general good. God is a benevolent Being; his benevolence, which prompted Him to call the universe into existence, would surely

prompt Him to extend his protection to it. Can we suppose that God, after he had created all things, should abandon his own works, and be indifferent to the concerns of the countless myriads of creatures whom he brought into existence, and formed with desires, and a capacity for happiness? Is it not more reasonable to believe, that he will take care of them, and provide for them according to their respective wants? Finally, God is just and righteous in all his doings, consequently he must exercise a moral government over his creatures, and reward or punish their actions, as is consistent with justice and equity; and in the course of his providence so overrule them, as to promote the ultimate end of his administration, and the establishment of righteousness. That being is destitute of every moral principle, who is not inclined to interpose, and who does not actually interpose, when he can, to patronize virtue, and to check the progress of vice.

A *third* argument in proof of Providence is derived from the dependent nature of creatures. God alone exists by necessity of nature, or, in other words, has the ground of his existence in himself; the existence of all other beings is contingent. As they might or might not have been created, so they may cease to be; there being nothing in the nature of things to ensure their continuance. As the ground of their existence is not in themselves, it is evident that they cannot, by their own will and power, prolong it for a single moment; and consequently, that it depends upon the will and power of God, as the flowing of a stream depends upon an uninterrupted supply of water from the fountain. As their existence is owing to the immediate exercise of his power, so that same power prevents them from returning into nothing, from which they came; for as the universe was created in a moment, in a moment it might be annihilated, were it not upheld by the word of his power. God has only to withdraw his hand, and the whole system of created things would instantly perish. It was his will which made, and it is his will which sustains and upholds them. Hence we learn that the absolute dependence of all creatures upon God for their continuance in being, is a powerful argument in favour of his providence.

It has been objected, that the absolute dependence of all things upon God, implies a reflection upon his wisdom; as if he had executed a work so imperfect, as to require his constant interference to prevent it from perishing. Men, it is said, construct works, which, when finished, have no further need of their care. A house will stand though the builder should never see it again. A watch or a clock will point to the hour, when it is passed out of the hands of the maker; but, it should be considered, that the builder of the house, or the maker of the watch, merely gave a particular form, or arrangement, to certain materials, which were ready at hand for use; they neither make them, nor uphold them in being. The durability of their works depends upon some other cause than their own power. For instance, the moving power in a watch or clock, or any other piece of machinery, is not in the machine itself, but in the elasticity of a spring, or the influence of gravitation, or the expansive force of the atmosphere. All the movements, and the different effects of a machine, are derived from the constant action of some power which is not in the machine. What ignorance, then, to represent the works of God, as being under the constant care of his providence, more imperfect than the works of man!

A *fourth* argument in favour of Providence, is founded on the order, harmony and regularity observable in the course of nature. Although the universe is composed of many parts, endowed with different qualities, and, in some instances, contrary to and destructive of each other, they are all retained in their proper places, and perform their peculiar functions with such order and harmony, as to promote the general good. The heavenly bodies perform their ordinary revolutions, at their appointed times, without interfering with each other. The seasons of the year succeed each other in regular order. The earth retains its productive powers, at the close of many generations who have been supplied by its produce; the sea continues within its ancient boundaries, and leaves the dry land to be the abode of terrestrial animals. The various classes of animals and vegetables have propagated themselves; so that the earth

is still stocked with inhabitants, and with full supply for their wants. Surely all these things prove a superintending providence. Even Heathen philosophers concluded, from the order and harmony observable in the course of nature, that there must be a wise and governing providence. "If one," says Cicero, "should enter a house, a school, or a forum, and see exact order and discipline observed there, he would not conclude that these things happened without a cause; but that there was some intelligent person who presided, and who was obeyed there. Much more, then, when he observes the regularity and order in the motions and vicissitudes of so many and such great bodies in nature, must he conclude that all these things are governed by an intelligent mind."

It is absurd to suppose that the universe took its present orderly form from the fortuitous concourse of atoms of matter. It is equally absurd and unreasonable to suppose, that it should by chance continue in the same orderly form, and all its parts perform, in a regular and harmonious manner, their respective functions. For if the world were governed by chance, it would more readily fall into disorder, than from a disorderly state take its present regular form.

It may be objected that the order which prevails throughout the universe, may be accounted for by the laws of nature, without an immediate interposition of the Deity, and proves only the wisdom of its original constitution. Before removing this objection, I ask what is meant by the laws of nature? A law, in its primary sense, is a rule established and enforced by authority, and obviously implies intelligence and power; but when it is applied to inanimate things, there is a change of its signification. It then signifies merely the stated, regular order in which they are found to subsist. What are generally called the laws of nature, are only facts, and are called laws on account of their uniformity. From observation and experience we know the fact, that bodies gravitate to a centre, and that the rays of light are subject to refraction and reflection; but can we explain the phenomena of nature, or show the true cause by which it is moved and sustained? Nature certainly does

not possess intelligence, nor activity, nor power of any kind. Matter, we know, is inert, and totally incapable of exertion, and can neither put itself in motion, nor stop itself when in motion; every modification which it undergoes is the effect of some external power. What, then, are the laws of nature? They are the particular modes in which the Deity exerts his power, which, being uniform, are accounted natural. Hence it follows, that they are so far from accounting for the order which is maintained in the universe, that they necessarily imply the actual and constant interposition of the Creator, and irresistibly suggest the idea of a Lawgiver, as do the laws of any human society.

A *fifth* argument in favour of Providence, arises from those moral sentiments and feelings, which exist in the mind of every human being, who has received any degree of cultivation. Even "the Gentiles, who have not the law, are a law to themselves, and show the works of the law written in their hearts." Rom. ii. 14, 15. There is a principle in every man, which distinguishes not only between truth and falsehood, but also between right and wrong. This principle is called conscience, and reminds us not only of the existence of God, but of his government; it recognises Him as presiding over our affairs, and as taking notice of our actions—to whom we are accountable; and pronounces a sentence of approbation, or disapprobation, according as our actions may be either good or bad. If there was no Providence, conscience would be a delusive faculty, and all its decisions would have no better foundation than the hopes and terrors of superstition; but if it be an original principle of our nature, it bears testimony to the moral administration of our Maker, and presupposes a supreme law, the commands and sanctions of which it proclaims and inculcates.

There are many other arguments which might be advanced in favour of Providence, such as the experience of every individual; the judgments which are occasionally executed upon notorious transgressors; the proportion which exists between the two sexes, which are nearly equal, for the regular continuance of the species; the variety in the human countenance,

preventing much inconvenience and confusion, imposition and crimes, which would inevitably follow among mankind, in their intercourse with one another, were their faces all alike.

The Scriptures put the doctrine of Divine Providence beyond all doubt. Among the number of passages in favour of this truth, I will call your attention to the following: "Bless our God, which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved." Ps. lxvi. 8, 9. "O Lord, thou preservest man and beast." Ps. xxxvi. 6. "The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing." Ps. cxlv. 15, 16. "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry." Ps. cxlvii. 8, 9. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." Acts xvii. 8. See also the sixth chapter of Matthew. These, and numerous other passages, clearly prove the providence of God.

The arguments which have been advanced in favour of providence, are sufficient to satisfy every unprejudiced mind of its reality. There have, however, been some who, though they profess to believe in a general, yet deny a particular providence. But how any man, who acknowledges the authority of divine revelation, can deny a particular providence, is inconceivable. The Scriptures expressly declare, that a sparrow does not fall to the ground without the knowledge of our heavenly Father; and that the hairs of our head are all numbered. Reason teaches us, that a whole cannot be taken care of, without taking care of its parts; or a species be preserved, if the individuals are neglected. To maintain a general, but deny a particular providence, is totally unintelligible, and without foundation.

The doctrine of a particular providence has a great tendency to promote the piety and consolation of mankind. To a God who governed the world solely by general laws, we might look with reverence, but not with confidence, and gratitude, and hope, which arise from the belief that he superintends its minutest affairs. The thought that he "compasses our paths, and is acquainted with all our ways;" that he watches our

steps, orders all the events in our lot; guides and protects us, and supplies all our wants;—this thought is most consolatory under all the trials of life, and is calculated to awaken in us sentiments and feelings of trust, hope, and gratitude to God, and to induce us to cast all our care and concerns upon him, who careth for us, and who overruleth all things for our good.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ON PROVIDENCE.

HAVING proved in the preceding chapter that there is a Providence, by several arguments, we proceed to consider the acts of Providence. They may be arranged under two heads: the preservation of his creatures, and the government of them.

By *preservation*, I mean that act of God by which all creatures, either in their species, or as individuals, with their respective essences and faculties, are kept in being. The same arguments which establish providence in general, apply here. Agreeably to these, the creature must for ever remain essentially the same that he was when first created. If it be essential to the creature to be independent the first moment of its existence, he must for ever remain so. As God preserves, so he also disposes of, and governs all creatures, by his providence.

By *government*, I understand that act of providence by which God determines whatsoever respects all events, and all the actions of all creatures, and directs them to the end fixed in his sovereign will. God governs the material system according to those laws which account for the order established, and regulate the movements which are continually going on in it. He keeps the sun in his place, and wheels the planets around him in their orbits; he fixes the mountains on their bases, and confines the ocean within its ancient boundaries. Hence, in

figurative language, he is said to command the sun to rise, the stars to shine, and other natural events to take place. And, as these laws by which the material system is governed are only the regular modes of his agency in the production of effects, it is evident that the exertion of his power upon the material system is immediate.

God governs the vegetable tribes by those laws which relate to the formation and generation of the seed, the protrusion of the stalk or stem, the expansion of the leaves and flowers, and the concoction of the fruit; so that not only the different species are preserved, but continue distinct, although growing together, with occasional varieties, arising from climate, soil, and cultivation.

God governs the lower animals by their instincts. Impelled by those instincts, birds build their nests and rear their young; the ant provides its food in the summer; birds of passage, as the stork, the crane, and the swallow, know the appointed times of their going and coming, and exactly observe them. They are entirely under his control, and he uses them as instruments to accomplish his will. Thus, frogs, lice, and flies, were his instruments in punishing the Egyptians; and ravens were his ministers to supply the prophet Elijah with food. The Scriptures make mention of many more such facts, showing that the animal creation is under the government of that Being, who gave them existence.

The providence of God extends more especially to man, and to every individual of the human family.

It extends to our birth and education, to our calling and occupation in life, and even to our death — to the time, the place, and manner of our death. Until the fixed period arrive appointed by Infinite Wisdom, every man, to whatever dangers he may be exposed, may regard himself as immortal; and, when it is come, no precautions of wisdom, nor skill of man, can save us from the tomb. “The days of man,” says Job, xiv. 5, “are determined, the number of his months is with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.” “All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come.

Job vii. 1; Ps. xxxix. 4. When some are said not to live out half their days, and others to have their lives prolonged, the meaning is, that in the one case, they die sooner than others of the same standing, or sooner than might have been reckoned upon from the strength of their constitution, by the effects of intemperance, or by some natural cause; and that in the other, they survive diseases which threatened to be fatal, and reach a good old age. In both cases, no man lives longer or shorter, than the days allotted to him by Providence. Providence is concerned in all the *events of man's life*. We indeed commonly say, that every man is the artificer of his own fortune; and this, so far as it respects man's pursuing the right course, as marked out by Providence to the attainment of an end, is undoubtedly true. But in a higher sense, we must believe that every man's lot and station is determined by the Lord. Wealth is not always bestowed upon the most industrious and deserving; neither is there any certain and invariable law by which men can attain honour and eminence. Riches and honour, and every good gift, are represented in the Scriptures as coming down from above; and to be distributed according to the sovereign disposal of the Almighty. "The rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the Maker of them all." "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; but God is the Judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another." Prov. xxii. 2; Ps. lxxv. 6. The providence of God *extends to all our actions* — to all free and voluntary actions, which depend upon the free will of man; to all his thoughts, purposes, schemes and determinations: "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, and he turneth it, wheresoever he will."

All contingent actions, or such as happen by mere chance, are under his control. We commonly ascribe those things to chance, whose cause we do not know, and whose occurrence we did not anticipate; but, strictly speaking, nothing happens by chance, as it regards God. Not even "a sparrow falls to the ground without his will." "The lot is thrown into the lap, but the whole disposal thereof, is of the Lord." Prov. xiv. 33.

That the providence of God is concerned in good actions, will not be denied. The Scriptures assert, "that God works in us, both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure." Phil. ii. 13.

The concern of Providence in the sinful actions, cannot be so satisfactorily explained, because it is difficult to ascertain how far the divine agency may proceed, without having any part in the sinfulness of the action. The fact, however, cannot be denied, that his Providence extends to evil events, as well as good. What do the Scriptures teach us on this subject? In Amos iii. 6, we read, "Is there evil in the city and hath not the Lord done it?" and in Isaiah xlv. 7, "The Lord saith, I form light and create darkness. I make peace and create evil." The Scripture saith of Pharaoh; "even for this purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." Rom. ix. 17. The apostle Peter, charging upon the Jews the crucifixion of Christ, nevertheless declares, that "he was delivered up according to the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God." The providence of God, in respect to evil events, is difficult and mysterious, but undeniable, and is explained in the following manner :

First, God *permits* sinful actions; that is, he does not hinder them; he does not interfere in the exercise of his sovereignty and power, to prevent them, as he might; for if God interfered to prevent the creature from sinning, he would force his will, and destroy his free agency; and consequently his accountability. Therefore, for wise and holy ends, he permits sin. "My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up to their hearts' lusts: and they walked in their own counsels." Ps. lxxxi. 11, 12. "In times past, he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways;" Acts xiv. 16; that is, to practise idolatry, and to live in those sins with which the Heathen were polluted.

Secondly, God limits, or sets bounds to sinful actions. He saith to wicked men, as he doth to the raging sea, "thus far shall ye go, and no farther." As he has access to the passions

of men, "he putteth his hook into the nose of the wicked, and turneth him whithersoever he pleaseth." Job xli. 2. He makes the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder he restraineth. Ps. lxxvi. 10. Thus has God limited and restrained, especially the wrath of persecutors. Sometimes, by giving such a turn to things as to change their purposes; sometimes, by throwing insurmountable obstacles in their way; and sometimes, also, by cutting short their wicked intention by their death.

In the third place, God not only permits and limits sinful actions; he also *overrules* them, so as to bring good out of evil, and promote the honour of his name. While men intend to do evil, God designs and effects good; just as the skilful physician sometimes makes use of poison in the cure of his patient. The sons of Jacob, in selling their brother and sending him to Egypt, committed a great sin; but God overruled it to the elevation of Joseph to the chief station of all Egypt, and the salvation of his father's family, in a time of famine. The Jews in the crucifixion of Christ, committed an enormous sin; yet thereby God has mysteriously accomplished his own purpose of grace, in the salvation of men.

The most difficult part, as it respects divine providence, is the physical agency of God in sinful actions. The doctrine, however, although mysterious, is undeniable; we are certain of the facts, but to reconcile them in every respect, and to show their agreement and consistency, is beyond the power of man. We know certainly, that God's decrees and power extend to all things, to evil as well as good; we know also, that man is a free agent, that in sinning he acts freely; but perfectly to reconcile these two great truths is beyond our powers. But it by no means follows, because we cannot see the agreement and harmony of two truths or facts, that they must therefore clash, or be opposed to each other.

In relation to God's permission of sin, some hold the following distinction. The natural power by which a creature performs an action is from God, but the quality, the moral character of an action is from man. Thus, the natural,

physical power by which I hold a weapon, or strike another, is from God; but the intention, or motive of the act (which constitutes its moral character), is my own.

The providence of God particularly extends to his church, its rise and progress, its means and resources, its enemies and difficulties, its victories and final triumph. God has engraven his church on the palm of his hand; she is near and dear to him as the apple of his eye. The world is established in Christ, on account of his atonement and intercession, and for his sake, kept together; and all the changes and revolutions of earth will finally result in the extension and establishment of that kingdom which shall never be moved.

Although the arguments which have been advanced are sufficient to establish our minds in the belief of the doctrine of providence, yet objections have been made by some which it will be necessary to notice. Some of these objections have been anticipated; namely, those which are founded on the existence of moral evil, the agency of God in the sinful actions of men, and its supposed incompatibility with human liberty. The first objection which I shall mention is, that the doctrine of providence supposes God to have his attention occupied with a multitude of cares, of which some are in danger of being neglected, and all are inconsistent with the enjoyment of undisturbed felicity. In reply to this objection, I observe, that the understanding of God is infinite, and is capable of attending to all the affairs of the world and the universe, without any effort; his knowledge being infinite, it embraces all things which exist, however obscure and minute; and being intuitive, it is as easy to him to govern the world, as to a man is a glance of his eye. As the power of God is almighty, there can be no resistance to that power, and its purposes are accomplished without exertion. "The Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary." Is. xl. 28. As God is everywhere present with his creatures, it costs him no labour to know them all, and all the events in the universe. "His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." "In Him we live, and move, and have our being."

Another objection against providence is, that the doctrine degrades the majesty of God, by representing him as extending his attention and care to objects altogether unworthy of him. But if it was worthy of God to give them being, how is it unworthy of him to uphold them? In the great chain of events, many things that appear small and insignificant, are in their consequences of great and vast importance.

In the third place, the physical evils which exist in the world are made an objection to the doctrine of Divine Providence. To say, that these evils are the consequence of general laws, is unsatisfactory, and an impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of God; as if he could not have made a system, from which all physical evil might have been excluded, or, if he was able, why he preferred the present system.

To say that they are not properly evils, but are ultimately productive of good, is true, in a limited sense; but still, this opinion is opposed to the divine wisdom and goodness, as if God could not have attained his end in the creation of the world and mankind, without the instrumentality of evil, or that he preferred it, without necessity.

In obviating this objection, we must take the moral character of our species into consideration. The world is a rebellious province; it is therefore not surprising that there should be some tokens of the displeasure of its sovereign.

God is not only wise and good, but also just to punish offenders, that the authority of his law may be maintained. If we consider mankind as a rebellious race, and the earth lying under the curse of the Creator for their sake, this objection to the existence of physical evil will appear to be of no account. Notwithstanding all the evils that exist, there will remain abundant evidence, that "the tender mercies of the Lord are over all his works." Ps. lxxiii. 11.

The last objection to which I shall call your attention, is founded on the afflictions of the righteous, and the prosperity of the wicked. Why is it, it is asked, that vice often triumphs, while virtue is depressed; that the innocent suffer as if they were guilty, and that the guilty go unpunished; would all this

take place if God exercised a moral government over mankind? With regard to the righteous, we must remember that they are imperfect beings, chargeable with many failings and transgressions, which render them worthy of correction; that the afflictions of the righteous are tokens of God's love towards them; that the trials of this life, have a tendency to exercise their Christian graces, and to promote their present and eternal happiness. The prosperity of the wicked may be accounted for in various ways. God may have a merciful design, to lead them by his goodness to repentance; Rom. ii. 4; or, he may give them prosperity, for the sake of others, making use of them as instruments, by which his goodness is bestowed upon their families, their dependants, their neighbourhood, and their country. The prosperity of the wicked, if they are not led to repentance by the goodness of God, proves, instead of a blessing, a curse to them; inasmuch as it has a tendency to estrange their hearts more and more from God, and to make them insensible to the concerns of eternity. The prosperity of the wicked was a stumbling-block to Asaph, until he went unto the sanctuary of God, and understood their end; Ps. vii. 3; xii. 16-20; then his difficulties were removed, and he found that the prosperity of the wicked was no objection against the providence of God.

An equal dispensation appears necessary to the objecters, to establish the doctrine of an overruling Providence. An equal distribution of rewards and punishments, in the present state, an allotment of temporal good and evil to men, according to their desert, is attended with insurmountable difficulties. This plan would necessarily require, that the righteous should enjoy prosperity without intermission; that they should be exempt from all the trials and anxieties of life; that no disease, no trouble, nothing to disturb their felicity, should happen to them, in their persons, or their families, or their friends; that everything should be subservient to their interest, and that nothing should interfere with their designs, or prevent their lawful schemes. As it regards the wicked, it would be necessary, that quite the reverse should take place with them. Such

a plan would require a complete change of the laws of nature, or such frequent alterations of them, that they would no longer serve as a guide to human conduct. An equal dispensation is, in the present state of society, altogether impossible, and would have a tendency to introduce disorder and confusion. Suppose the head of a family were a wicked man; agreeably to this scheme, it would be requisite that he should be immediately punished; if he were punished immediately, say, by the loss of his property, or cut off from the land of the living, his children, and those dependent upon him, would suffer with him, and thus the equality of the dispensation would be instantly destroyed. The same thing would happen if the children were wicked, and the parent were pious; for every stroke which lighted upon them, would fall upon him, and the innocent would suffer with the guilty. Thus we see that the separate treatment of each individual according to his desert, is, in the present state and relation of things, impossible. The tares and the wheat grow together until the harvest time, when the Lord of the harvest will separate them; our place is to let them grow together, and not to gather up the tares before the time, lest we also root out the wheat. Matt. xiii. 28-30. The unequal distribution of rewards and punishments, of prosperity and adversity, in the course of Providence, in this life, may distress good men, and furnish bad men with an argument against Providence, but ought to give us no disturbance. We ought to remember that the providence of God is, in many respects, mysterious; that "his ways are not as our ways, and his thoughts, not as our thoughts." We see and know enough to convince us that God is the moral and supreme Governor, and that he loves righteousness and hates iniquity. Let us consider that the present life is a season of trial, preparatory to the next world, and that the time is approaching, when the Judge of all the world will manifest, to an assembled universe, in rendering unto every man according to his deserts, that all the administrations of his providence were just and wise, good and merciful.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ON THE FALL OF MAN, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

WE have seen that God in the beginning created man after his own image and likeness; that man endowed with the image of his Creator found himself happy in the enjoyment of God, the fountain of everlasting felicity. But this happy state was not of long continuance. Man was fallible, as every creature necessarily is. God alone is immutable; immutability is an attribute of his own nature, and cannot be communicated to any creature. He could indeed have created man in such a manner, and have afforded him such assistance, that no temptation should overcome him; but still, considered in himself, he was subject to change:—mutability being inseparable from a created free agent, we see the possibility of his falling by the abuse of his free agency.

But why did God invest man with a power, the abuse of which might dishonour his Maker, and involve himself and all his posterity in misery? In reply, we ask, why did God make a creature capable of being the subject of law, and of obtaining a reward? Had man not possessed liberty of choice, he could not have yielded moral obedience.

But why, it may be asked again, did God permit the fall of Adam? Why did he not guard against the fatal consequences of liberty, by fortifying his mind against temptation, in the same manner as the saints are preserved by his secret power from total and final apostasy? What is this but to ask, why he has permitted sin? Still, it may be asked, why God suffered a thing, so evil and distressing as sin, to exist? Perhaps the best answer ever given to this question in the present world, is that which was given by Christ, concerning one branch of the divine dispensations to mankind: “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

The permission of sin was, no doubt, approved of by infinite

wisdom, and seen by the Omniscient eye to be necessary towards that good, which God proposed in creating the universe. If Adam had not fallen, Christ would not have redeemed mankind: for if there had been no apostates, there could have been no Redeemer, and no redemption. The mercy of God, a most amiable attribute, would have been unknown to the universe. All the blessings bestowed on mankind, would have been the reward of the obedience of Adam, and his posterity. But the blessings bestowed on glorified saints are the rewards of the obedience of the Eternal Son of God. These blessings could not have been given, had Christ not obeyed; and Christ could not have obeyed, had he not become the substitute for sinners, or the Mediator between God and fallen man.

But let us proceed to consider the history of the fall of our primitive parents, as related by Moses, in Genesis, the third chapter, from the first to the seventh verses. From the account here given of the fall, we learn that our first parents were seduced by temptation to disobey and transgress the laws of God. The temptation was first addressed to the woman, probably in the absence of her husband.

The tempter was Satan, who assumed the form of a serpent; or took possession of a real serpent, the better to conceal and cover his design. That the real tempter was Satan, appears from the following passages of Holy writ: "Ye are of your father, the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do; he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth; because there is no truth in him: when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it." John viii. 44. In this passage, our Lord evidently referred to the deceit which Satan practised upon our first parents, and his murder of them.

In the Revelation of John, in the twelfth chapter and ninth verse, we read: "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the Devil and Satan." Again, in the twentieth chapter, second verse; "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan." In these passages,

Satan is called the Serpent, no doubt, in allusion to his assuming the form of a serpent, when he deceived our first parents. Hence it appears that the real tempter was Satan.

It may be asked here, how is it possible, that the animal known by the name of serpent, which was destitute of reason, and the gift of speech, should have uttered articulate sounds? The only solution of this difficulty, is to suppose, that the invisible agent in the temptation, was permitted to cause such vibrations of the air, by means of the organs of the serpent, or in its mouth, as made the woman hear the words already recited. The serpent had no knowledge of what was spoken, and attached no meaning to the words which it uttered; they were properly the words of the Superior Being, who used it as an instrument. No man should be ready to assert that it was impossible for a superior being, with divine permission, so to move the air, that it should convey such sounds to the ear as he pleased. The authority of Moses, as an inspired writer, should put the fact beyond all doubt.

Satan commenced and carried on his temptation with great art and cunning. It appears that he did not find fault directly, with the command not to eat of the forbidden fruit, or, to deny the truth of the threatening; but he began as though he was ignorant of the fact, and was desirous of obtaining information, that he might know the truth of it. "Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?" In reply to this question, the woman answered: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but of the fruit of the tree, which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." As soon as the tempter had prevailed upon Eve to listen to him, he gained an important point. Hence he immediately replied to her: "Ye shall not surely die." By this answer, he intimated, either that Adam had not given her correct information, in regard to the divine command; or that she misunderstood it; or that, if God had really given such a command, it was merely done to keep them in fear and subjection, without having any design to execute the threatening.

The tempter proceeded to cast reflection on God, as if he was willing to deprive them of the honour and happiness which they might obtain and enjoy, by eating of the fruit; and as if he was not sincere in making threatenings which he did not intend to execute. "For God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

The affirmation of the serpent, that the eating of the forbidden fruit would be followed by a great increase of knowledge, awakened her desire — the desire became urgent, and fixed her attention solely upon the object; which at length so fascinated her, that she lost all power of resistance, and yielded to the temptation. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." It is probable, that she was standing near by the tree, when the tempter came, and that the serpent plucked of the fruit, and ate; and the woman, seeing that it had no pernicious effect, was induced to do likewise. "The woman saw that the tree was good for food;" probably not only because it was pleasant to the eyes, and because the serpent said it was good, but also because she saw him eat of it without receiving any injury.

The woman, who was first in the transgression, soon persuaded her husband, and induced him to eat. Some have inferred, from the assertion of the apostle, 1 Tim. xi. 14, "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression," that he was not really deceived, but only overcome by the persuasion of Eve, and, out of compliance to her, he ate, not knowing the consequences. But the apostle's meaning, in this passage, is, that Adam was not first deceived; or that he was not deceived to that degree the woman was. Though the woman was first in the transgression, her conduct was not more criminal than that of Adam, and, perhaps, less so, inasmuch as he yielded, so far as we know, without those temptations and assaults with which Eve was overpowered.

It is difficult to perceive how our first parents could be im-

posed upon by the words of the serpent, between which and the words of God there was an express contradiction; or how it was possible that sin found access into a holy soul; yet it is certain that they did break the command of God. Our first parents sinned freely, without any compulsion. God was not the author of their sin. He created man perfectly holy, with no defect, no weakness, or no tendency to sin. He endowed them with every power which was necessary to enable them to perform the duty assigned to them. He neither commanded nor persuaded them to eat of the tree of knowledge; but expressly forbade it; and enforced obedience by promises of still greater blessings than they enjoyed, and by the threatening of death in case of disobedience: nor did he withdraw from them, in the moment of temptation, the ability with which he had furnished them for their duty. The temptations of Satan could not exempt them from blame; for Satan used no force, only persuasion: and this persuasion was in direct opposition to the command of God.

The sin of our first parents was no small sin, but one of great magnitude, and very heinous in its nature; and the punishment inflicted upon them on account of the transgression, was perfectly in accordance with divine justice. Considered in the abstract, there was no criminality in eating of the forbidden fruit. The sinfulness consisted in its breach of the divine command; and whether God had determined upon a thing, in itself small or great, as the test of man's obedience, the violation of the precept would have been disobedience to him, and actual rebellion against the lawful authority of God. Though the prohibition not to eat of the forbidden fruit, may appear to be a thing small in itself, yet it did not lessen the crime of transgression against God, but rather aggravated it. The easier the precept was, the less excuse could our first parents have for violating it. There were several other circumstances connected with this transaction, by which it appears, that the sin of Adam and Eve was great and heinous. Their Creator put them under many obligations to love him, to respect his authority, and obey his commandments. He was their

Creator, the Author of their existence. He had invested them with dominion over all the creatures. He had given them the garden of Eden as the place of their residence, and supplied them with everything which was necessary to make them comfortable and happy. They had the liberty to make free use of all the fruit of the trees in the garden, with the exception of the fruit of a single tree. When he charged them not to eat of the fruit of that tree, he had warned them of the consequence of disobedience. But, notwithstanding all these considerations, they plucked and ate the forbidden fruit.

It has been the opinion of some, that Adam by this single act, in eating of the forbidden fruit, transgressed the whole moral law contained in the ten commandments. Whether this was the fact, or not, I shall not attempt to show, but leave this exercise of ingenuity to those who can find entertainment in it, and believe that it will answer a valuable purpose. The Apostle James indeed says: "That he who offends in one point is guilty of all." His meaning, however, is not that he is guilty of a formal breach of every commandment, but that he virtually subverts the whole law, by rebelling against the authority upon which it is founded. The words are applicable to the first sin; it was actual rebellion against God and his authority; it was making his own will his law, instead of submitting to the Almighty; it was an open insurrection against the supremacy of God, and an attempt to establish a separate and independent dominion upon earth. The sin merited, therefore, the dreadful punishment which ensued. Moses, in relating the fall of our first parents, gives us an account of its dreadful consequences. First, he says: "Their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked." They then "covered themselves with fig leaves, and hid themselves among the trees, that he might not find them." The nakedness spoken of here, which gave rise to terror, does not mean bodily nakedness. That they were without covering, they knew before. The opening of their eyes, and their knowing that they were naked, must have been the nakedness of the soul. This may be inferred from the words of Adam, who said not, I was ashamed,

but "I was afraid, because I was naked." Our first parents were conscious of guilt, and were afraid to meet their Judge. Next, they were summoned into his presence, and the sentence was pronounced upon them, by which they were subject to all the miseries of life, and finally death. Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. And, lastly, they were driven out of Paradise, and sent into the wide world, now cursed for their sake, in which, toil and labour, trouble and afflictions, awaited them. "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and live for ever: Therefore, the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, cherubims, and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." Gen. iii. 22—24.

Such were the consequences of the fall of our primitive parents. But they did not terminate upon them, but extended to all their descendants. Adam was, as we shall see in the next chapter, the head and representative of the whole human family, in consequence of which, he involved all his posterity in misery, by his disobedience. The fountain being polluted, the stream which flows from it is impure; the tree being corrupt, the fruit which it bears is also corrupt. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rom. v. 12.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ON THE FALL OF MAN, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

IN the preceding Chapter, we considered the fall of Adam, and its consequences. We observed that Adam was the federal head of the human race, and that, in consequence of his fall, all men are involved in guilt and misery. As this subject is of great importance, in religion, it must not be slightly passed over. We shall therefore endeavour to pursue the subject, and to illustrate it in such a manner, as we think is consistent with the Scriptures.

We observe, then, in the first place, that God made a covenant with Adam.

A covenant is an agreement between two parties, on certain terms. The terms made use of in the Scriptures are, ברית, *Berith*, and διαθήκη.

The covenant of works is that gracious compact between God, as the Creator, and Adam, as the head and representative of all his prosperity, by which eternal happiness was promised, on condition of perfect obedience to the whole moral law, attested by a particular law; and death, in case of disobedience, was denounced. That such a covenant was made with Adam, we prove, first, from Genesis ii. 16, 17; "And the Lord God commanded the man," &c. In these words are contained all the requisites of a covenant, namely, parties, conditions, sanctions and seals.

It has been objected, that there is no mention of a covenant of works in Genesis. Although the word covenant is not expressly mentioned, in these passages, yet the thing intended is virtually taught. And why, then, should we object against the words and language by which it is conveniently and intelligibly expressed?

It is objected, that the transaction with Adam could not be federal, but that it ought to be considered rather as a law than

as a covenant. In a covenant, it is said, both parties ought to be free and independent, and have perfect liberty to consent or reject; but this was not the case with Adam; he, being a creature, had no choice, but was bound to acquiesce in the will of his Creator. It is true, these qualifications are necessary in a human covenant. No human covenant is obligatory in law, unless both parties act freely, and without compulsion. But although Adam was not at liberty to accept or reject, yet he freely gave his consent, and was willing to obey the command of his Maker, for the purpose of obtaining the reward, and avoiding the penalty.

The transaction was federal, on the part of God, as he proposed a condition; sanctioned it with a promise and a threatening; and, on the part of Adam, as he acquiesced in the will of his Creator, and agreed to fulfil the condition.

I just observed, that in this transaction are found all the parts of a covenant. The parties were God and Adam. The condition was obedience to the positive precept. The threatening was death; and the promise not distinctly expressed; but implied in the threatening, was life. For if death was to be the consequence of sin, it follows that life was to be the reward of obedience.

Secondly, we find in the Old Testament references and expressions which imply the existence of such a covenant. In Hosea vi. 7, we read, "But they, like men, have transgressed the covenant." The original has it: "they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant." The same Hebrew phrase occurs in Job xxxi. 33, and in Psalm lxxxii. 6, 7.

Thirdly, in the New Testament a comparison is drawn between Christ, the last Adam, and Adam our natural head: each is exhibited as a representative. Rom v. to the end. The relation of Christ to his people, is here introduced with an express reference to the first Adam; therefore it is said, that Adam is a figure of him that was to come. Now if the first was a figure of the second, and the second stood in covenant relation, we must conclude that the first did, or the most essential features of the comparison is lost.

Fourthly, the condition which Christ fulfilled, in the covenant of grace, was the very condition of the covenant of works which Adam failed to fulfil.

Fifthly, that Adam was under a covenant, appears from the public character which he sustained, in a state of innocency. Adam, as we shall immediately show, was the head and representative of his posterity ; so that they would have been entitled to his reward, if he had obeyed, and were involved in his guilt, when he fell. If Adam was the public head and representative of his descendants, it must have been in virtue of a covenant made with him ; for, as the natural head of his posterity, they could not be involved in his guilt, any more than in that of their immediate parents. And if he had been only under a law, and not a covenant, he could have been no more than the natural head of his posterity.

We have noticed, that the parties in this covenant were God and Adam. God must be considered as the Creator and Sovereign Lord, possessed of right to require the service of his creatures, in whatever way his wisdom might determine ; and Adam must be considered as a subject of divine government, having no right to appoint his own service ; but in duty bound to obey, free from constraint, but not from moral obligation. He accepted the terms of the law without compulsion ; but with perfect freedom ; because whatever seemed right to his Creator, seemed right to him.

But the character in which Adam ought chiefly to be viewed, is that of a representative, or the federal head of his descendants. He was indeed the natural head of the human race, as the first man from whom all other men were to proceed, according to the law of generation ; but this relation is not the ground on which his actions are imputed to his posterity. Some theologians account for the present state of human nature upon the simple principle of transmission ; and maintain, that as a tree propagates its kind, or produces a tree like itself ; so Adam conveyed his own depraved nature to his posterity. Others object to this statement, and say, that this view of the subject is to account for a moral phenomenon by a physical

law. They think, the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, is more consonant to justice, if he is considered as their federal head. Indeed, the idea that all men are involved in sin, merely because their first father happened to be a sinner, does not appear to be reconcilable with justice. If Adam had been only our natural head, he would have communicated the same nature to us which he received from his Creator, whatever might have befallen himself; because, on this supposition, as I just observed, we should have had no concern in his sin; nor have been involved in his guilt, any more, than in that of our immediate parents. We say, therefore, that Adam was not only the natural, but the federal head of his children.

That Adam was the federal head of his posterity, we may justly infer from the fact, that the effects of his sin extend to all his offspring. Although no mention is made of his posterity, in express terms, yet, if we attend to the history of our first parents, in Paradise, we shall find, that several things were said to them, in which they are not mentioned, but are evidently included.

Thus, when God had created Adam and Eve, "he blessed them, and said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." Gen. i. 28. In this passage, no mention was made of posterity; but it appears very clear that they were included, as they have been at all times the subjects of this blessing. Again, in the succeeding verse; "God said, behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of the tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." Here again, no mention is made of the descendants of Adam; but the words were not spoken to our first parents alone, but in relation to their posterity, and they were included in the grant to use and enjoy the productions of the soil, in all ages. The threatening, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," was addressed, in the first instance, to Adam alone, but certainly was not intended to be limited to him, as is evident from its execution upon his children. Hence the sentence pronounced upon Adam, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou

return," must be viewed as a sentence upon all who, in virtue of it, suffer death and dissolution. Again, no man will deny that the curse which followed the transgression of our first parents, did extend to his posterity. The denunciation, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life—in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground," Gen. iii. 17, 18, extends to the whole human family, in all ages of the world. Bread is still obtained by the sweat of the face; and the earth still, without culture, produces thorns and thistles; whereas labour is necessary to obtain from it things proper, and necessary for the support of animal life.

From these observations, it appears, that it is no valid objection against the representative character of Adam, that he was addressed as an individual, and no direct notice is taken of his posterity. The effects of his fall, to those who sprung from him, from the beginning to the present time, prove that he did not fall alone, but with him all mankind.

That Adam was the federal head of his posterity, is evident from various passages of Scripture, which teach that sin, and condemnation, and death, have come upon all mankind, on account of their connexion with him. This is taught in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, in the twelfth, eighteenth and nineteenth verses. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." "By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners." "In Adam all died." 1 Cor. xv. 22. In these passages, we are plainly taught that sin, death and condemnation, have come upon all men, on account of their connexion with Adam. This must have happened either on account of their natural relation to him, as the common Father of all the children of men; or because of a federal relation, as the public head and representative in the covenant of works.

But it cannot be by means of our natural relation that we are involved in the guilt and condemnation of Adam. For,

on account of our natural relation, it could not any more be said, that sin, death, and condemnation, have passed upon us from Adam, than from our immediate parents, or our ancestors who have lived between Adam and us. As we are, therefore, not involved in the guilt and condemnation, on account of our natural relation to him as our common parent, we conclude, that sin, death, and condemnation, have come upon the posterity of Adam on account of a federal relation, or that he stood as our public head and representative in the covenant God made with him. It is also worthy of notice, that the passages quoted speak of but one sin in which his posterity was concerned. "The judgment was by one." "By one man's offence death reigned." If it was because of our natural relation to Adam that sin, death, and condemnation, have come upon us; why might not this be asserted of all his sins, which he committed during his earthly existence, as well as of his sin in eating the forbidden fruit? Hence, we conclude, that the consequences of Adam's fall to his posterity have resulted, not from their natural, but their federal relation to him.

That Adam was the federal head of his descendants, is evident from those texts of Scripture which teach that Adam was a type of Christ; and where mention is made of the first and second Adam. "Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come." Rom. v. 14. "The first man, Adam, was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." 1 Cor. xv. 45. "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second Man is the Lord from heaven;" verse 47. In the first of these quotations, Adam is called the figure, or the type, of him that was to come. In the second passage, Christ is called the last Adam, because, as we conceive, the first Adam was a type of him. Now, to be a type, it is necessary there should be some resemblance between the type and the antitype. As a mere man, consisting of soul and body, Adam was no more a type than any other man. Wherein then does the resemblance consist? I answer, it consisted in this: as Adam was,

in the covenant of works, a public person, the head and representative of his posterity; so also Christ was, in the covenant of grace, the head of believers—his spiritual seed. The contrast is stated at considerable length by Paul, in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

The condition of the covenant was obedience to the law under which man was placed, expressed in the words, "That he should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." But if we consider that this positive precept was only given to make trial of Adam, we shall be convinced that his obedience was not limited to it, but that it had respect to the whole law of nature. The law of nature is substantially the same with the moral law, contained in the ten commandments, and was originally impressed upon the heart of man at his creation. But the precept concerning the tree of knowledge was properly the condition, because it was by that, man's respect to the authority which had enacted the whole law was to be tried. Here it may, perhaps, be asked, would the covenant have been broken by the transgression of any other precept of the law? We answer, that as the design of the positive precept was to make trial of the obedience of Adam, he would have been equally unworthy of happiness if he had transgressed in any other instance. But if we consider that he was naturally inclined to observe the law, and that there was difficulty of temptation to a breach of the law, he was not liable, or would not be permitted to sin by any other violation of the law, than that of the positive precept.

The promise of the covenant was life. Though no promise is mentioned in the original transaction, it is inferred from the penalty. The threatening, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," implied, that if he did not eat, he should not die, but live. This life implied in the threatening, it is supposed, contained the continuance of the natural life which he then enjoyed, the continuance of the spiritual life which he then possessed, and eternal life and happiness hereafter. The penalty annexed to the covenant was death; death temporal, death spiritual, and death eternal.

It remains to speak of the seals of the covenant. Some have maintained that there were four seals, or sacraments of the covenant of works; Paradise, the Sabbath, the tree of knowledge, and the tree of life; but we are inclined to believe, that there was but one seal. Paradise has been said to be a seal of the covenant. Paradise was indeed an emblem of heaven, which is often called Paradise in the New Testament; but it does not follow that the earthly Paradise was originally a type of it. Adam was placed in it immediately after his creation, and dwelt in it during the time of trial; Paradise could, therefore, not have been a seal; it would have been contrary to the nature and design of a seal, which is not administered till the terms of the covenant be fulfilled. The same objection may be urged against the Sabbath being a seal; the use of it was permitted to Adam, and enjoined upon him, before his trial commenced.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, has been considered by some as a seal of the covenant. The tree may have been so called, because, by abstaining from its fruit, Adam would come to the possession of the highest good; but, by eating it, would involve himself in the greatest evil. If this statement is correct, then it may be considered as a seal, being thus significant of the consequences of obedience and disobedience; but it is worthy of observation, that, contrary to the design of other seals, it confirmed the threatening, as much as the promise. Except in this case, seals are always understood to be appended to the promise; and the common relation of the tree of knowledge, to both the promise and the threatening, may justly make us doubt whether it was such. To say that it was a seal, is to confound two things, which, in all other covenants, are perfectly distinct — the condition and the seal.

The tree of life has been considered as a seal of the covenant; and, indeed, was the only seal. It was so called, to signify that it was a symbol of the life promised to obedience, and not because it had any inherent virtue of conferring life and immortality. It was a seal to confirm the faith of Adam in the reality of the covenant, and that he would receive from

his God the promised blessing of life, on condition of his perfect obedience for the time prescribed.

There is no doubt that our first parents consented to this covenant. They were perfectly holy; we must therefore conclude, that they readily accepted of any thing, proposed by God. Besides, Eve, in the name of them both, explicitly acknowledged their obligation to observe the covenant, when she said to the serpent; "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree, which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." Gen. iii. 2, 3.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ON THE FALL OF MAN, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

IN this Chapter, our attention will be directed to the effects of Adam's sin on his posterity; the imputation of his guilt; and original depravity.

Before we begin this subject, I shall answer the inquiry; whether the covenant of works still subsists; or, whether it is annulled by the violation of its terms? In reply, I observe, that the law of the covenant, called the moral law, retains all its authority; that the penalty of the law is in full force against all who are under it; but that the covenant, as a covenant, no longer exists: although it demands obedience to all its moral precepts, and executes its penalty upon transgressors, it does not promise life to the obedient. Nothing remains but the precept, and the penalty; the promise is cancelled, so that perfect obedience to the law, as a condition of life, is no longer required. The covenant of works is superseded by the covenant of grace, and the promise of life belongs to that covenant alone.

That Adam's sin is imputed to his posterity, or, that they in consequence of his fall have become sinners, is proved:

In the first place, from their relation to him in the covenant of works. In a former Chapter it was shown, that God entered into a covenant with Adam, and that Adam was constituted the public head and representative of his posterity, who should descend from him. Hence we conclude, that since he sinned, and fell, while acting in this public character, those whom he represented, of course, fell in him; so that in consequence of his sin, all mankind have become sinners in the sight of God, and exposed to the punishment due to sin. The fact, that children often suffer, and are subject to penalties for the sins of their parents, is justified by the laws, customs and usages of all nations, wherever treason is punishable by the laws of the country. A nobleman, for instance, when he commits treason against his sovereign, is not only stripped of his titles, honour, and estates, himself, but his children are also reduced to poverty and misery, until the attainder is taken off.

We say then, in the first place, that by the sin of Adam his posterity became liable to the punishment denounced against himself. They became guilty through his guilt, which is placed to their account; so that they are treated as if they had personally broken the covenant. In the second place, this doctrine is proved from the fifth chapter of Romans. In this chapter the Apostle teaches, that sin, condemnation, and death, have come upon all the posterity of Adam, in consequence of his one offence: "By one man's disobedience many were made" or constituted "sinners." Rom. v. 19. The apostle does not mean to say, that they are treated as sinners, although they are not really such; because the question naturally follows, how can they be justly treated as sinners, if they are not guilty? Again, the apostle says, verse 16, "The judgment was by one," or by one offence, "to condemnation." In these words the apostle plainly teaches us, that for the one offence—the deed of one man—for the transgression of Adam, all men are punished according to divine justice. There is no mention made of their personal sins, but of one sin committed before they were born, by him whose children they are. The apostle expresses the same mournful truth, when he says: "Through

the offence of one, many are dead." "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." In these words the apostle teaches us, that all men are subject to death on account of Adam's sin. As death is the wages of sin, it is the natural conclusion, if we died in Adam, we sinned in him, or were chargeable with his sin, as our representative. In the 14th verse, the apostle brings children under notice, and asserts that they die on account of Adam's transgression. Infants cannot be guilty of actual sin, and yet they must die, as well as adults; and how can we account for the fact, but upon the supposition that, somehow or other, they were sinners in the sight of God. The death of infants is utterly inexplicable, but upon the principle of original sin. If children are innocent, how is it consistent with the justice of God to punish them with death and misery?

The sin of Adam, then, is imputed to his posterity, and in consequence of his sin, all mankind come into the world in a state of depravity. The natural depravity in which we are conceived and born is called original sin; by which we are averse to that which is good, and prone to all manner of evil.

The doctrine of our church in regard to this subject, is expressed in the Heidelberg Catechism, in the following terms. In the seventh question it is asked, "Whence then proceeds this depravity of human nature?" The answer is, "From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise; hence, our nature is become so corrupt, that we are all conceived and born in sin."

But, if the soul is depraved from its commencement, it may be asked: Does it proceed so from the hands of God; does God create the soul sinful? Does he infuse depraved principles at its first formation? If so, is not God then the author of sin? Or, is the soul created pure in the beginning? and does it become contaminated with its connexion with the body? If so, then we may inquire again, how can there be moral contagion in a piece of matter? or, how can the union of a spirit to matter cause the pollution of that spirit? These are

questions which are beyond our comprehension, and cannot be answered. Let us be satisfied with the fact that all men come into the world in a state of depravity, and proceed to consider the arguments by which the doctrine is supported, both by Scripture and experience.

First, let us attend to the early period of the history of mankind. Previous to the deluge we are told, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Gen. vi. 5. And immediately after the flood it is again repeated, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Gen. viii. 21. The phraseology, "the imagination of the heart," means, that all his thoughts, all his desires, all his purposes, are evil, expressly, or by implication, because the subject of them is sinful, or because they do not proceed from a holy principle, and are not directed to a proper end.

It is added, that they are "only evil" — evil without any mixture of good; and they are evil "continually," or all the day; so that the soul is not occasionally, but habitually under the influence of depravity. The historian goes on to state the cause of this constant and universal effect, namely human nature itself; he affirms that the imagination of man's heart is evil "from his youth" — that is, from his infancy; for how should a man be sinful from his youth, unless the seeds of evil exist in his constitution — unless he be sinful from the commencement of his being? The tree must be corrupted to the core, which produced corrupt fruit at first, and continues to produce it as long as it stands. This, then, is one proof that human nature is depraved. Another proof you find recorded in the fifty-first Psalm; "Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."

In these words, David maintains that his nature was depraved before he saw the light. Men might think otherwise of him, and call him innocent; but in the eyes of God he was polluted. How could he be corrupted, before he was capable of acting and thinking, but by transmission of moral defilement from Adam, his federal head?

The next proof is taken from the conversation of our Lord with Nicodemus: "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh." John iii. 6. The term flesh has different meanings, in Scripture; sometimes it signifies men, who are so called, because they live in fleshly bodies; Isai. xl. 6; Gen. vi. 13; Matt. xxiv. 22; and sometimes it signifies the corrupt principle in man, or his nature as depraved. Rom. vii. 18; viii. 8, 13; Gal. v. 17. It is used in both these senses, in the passages which we are considering. Our Lord, in his conversation with Nicodemus, is speaking of two births; the first of which he ascribes to the flesh, and the second to the spirit; and he undoubtedly means to say; that man, at his natural birth, is flesh—wholly polluted—but that it is only at his supernatural birth, that he becomes spirit, or is inspired with the principles of holiness.

Again, the doctrine of natural depravity appears from all those passages, which teach the necessity of regeneration. We must "be born again;" we must "put off the old man, and put on the new;" Col. iii. 9, 10; we are "saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Tit. iii. 5, 6. These, and various similar passages, are unintelligible, if the nature of man is not totally depraved. If no man can be admitted into the kingdom of heaven, until he is renewed by the Holy Spirit; then all must be without original righteousness, and are totally corrupted.

The early appearance of depravity, in children, is a strong argument in proof of original sin. Some children, indeed, are sanctified from the womb. Still, even these, in some degree, and all others in a greater degree, exhibit, at an early period—from the dawn of moral action—evil affections and evil conduct. They are disobedient, wrathful, unkind, and revengful. All of them are proud, ambitious, vain, selfish, and destitute of piety to God. If children were virtuous, they would admire and love, reverence and glorify Him with all their hearts. But no instance of this nature can be found.

We are apt to ascribe these things to ignorance, or the absence of reason, rather than depravity. But if they are in themselves opposed to the law of God, to which man's nature

was at first exactly conformed, a change must have taken place in his moral frame, or there would have been no disorder in it, at any period — no variance with the Divine law. Can we conceive any thing similar in the infant Redeemer; any signs of impatience, jealousy and anger, or any other passion, which could disturb the calm of his mind? From his example, we may learn what human nature would have been, from the beginning of its existence, if it had retained its primitive innocence. Mankind, therefore, according to the language of the Psalmist, “are estranged from the womb, and go astray as soon as they are born.”

The last proof which I shall produce, of original sin, is the universal depravity of mankind. Mankind are universally depraved. This is evident, not only from explicit declarations of the Word of God; but also from history and observation. Paul, in the first part of his Epistle to the Romans, proves that both Jews and Gentiles were under sin. The Gentiles were ignorant of the character and worship of the true God, and had fallen into idolatry. They were vile in their affections, and sunk in the lowest state of moral degradation. They practised all kind of sins and immorality. Even the wise men among them, their philosophers, did not escape the general contagion.

The Jews were in possession of the knowledge and worship of Jehovah, the true and living God. They had the law of God, published by God himself, and enforced with threatenings and promises. The prophets were sent to them to warn, to exhort and reprove them, and to call them to their duty. Yet, notwithstanding, they were a rebellious and disobedient people. They often forsook the worship of God, for the worship of the idol gods of the Heathens; blessed, or chastised, they were still the same — a refractory and ungrateful people.

A review of the history of the world, in various nations and ages, confirms the doctrine of the Scriptures concerning the entrance of sin, and the depravity of our species. What is the history of the world, in past ages; but a history of crimes and wickedness, of oppression and abominations, of war and blood-

shed, and many other sins? In what way shall we account for these things, unless we admit that man is in a fallen and depraved state, and has lost the image of his Maker?

Some endeavour to explain this fact by the influence of bad example. Example, indeed, has a great influence in forming the manners of the young. Good example has a tendency to restrain, in a measure, the exercise of the corrupt principles within, and to produce external morality; and is often blessed, as a means of grace. Bad example has a tendency to make men more wicked than they otherwise would be. But the influence of example is not sufficient to account for the universal prevalence of sin. We sometimes see youth very vicious, who had the best example set before them by their parents; and we see that children are more readily disposed to follow wicked, than good examples. If human nature is not depraved, why is bad example so readily imitated? What gives it such universal influence? Most assuredly, it must be owing to some permanent cause. And what can that cause be, but an innate propensity to evil—a natural principle of corruption within? Since, then, all mankind, in all ages, countries and situations, and even when educated with the utmost care, and favoured with good example, do invariably run into the commission of sin, reason and common sense teach us, that we must account for this effect, from a tendency to sin in the very nature; and that, nature is depraved and corrupted.

Although we assert that all mankind are universally depraved and corrupted, we do not mean to say, that the human character is depraved to the full extent of the human powers; or, that man is as depraved a being, as his faculties will permit him to be.

Individuals may differ in their mental endowments, and talents; and yet, those of inferior faculties may be worse than those who are possessed of superior powers of mind. For instance, Saul appears to have been a man of more talents than Jeroboam; Jeroboam, than Ahab; and Uzziah, than either; yet Ahab was a worse man than Jeroboam; Jeroboam, than Saul; and Saul, than Uzziah. The young man who came to

Christ to know "what good thing he should do, to have eternal life," was certainly less depraved than his talents would have permitted him to be.

We often notice men, who neither are, nor profess to be Christians, and who, instead of being wicked according to the extent of their faculties, are sincere, just, and amiable, upright and beneficent, in their walk and intercourse with the world, so as to secure the esteem and affection of their fellow-men, and of all with whom they are acquainted. Can it be said, of such characters, that they are as sinful as many others possessed of powers far inferior; or that they are as sinful as they can be? We sometimes see individuals, without any visible enlargement of their faculties, become more wicked than they were at a period not long preceding. And, if we look around in our families and connexions, from an acquaintance with their true characters, we shall be furnished with decisive evidence, that some of them are far less profligate than, with their faculties, they might become.

Although man is not so wicked and depraved as he might be; yet, in a state of nature—in an unregenerated state—he is not in possession of any real, moral excellence, or evangelical virtue. His heart, after all the abatements are made which can be made, is set to do evil, in a most affecting and dreadful manner. What an awful picture does this give us of the human character! How ought it to humble us, and teach us the necessity of being born again, without which we cannot see the kingdom of God!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

OF ACTUAL SIN, AND THE PUNISHMENT OF SIN.

IN the preceding Chapter we endeavoured to prove the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, and the consequent universal depravity of human nature. In this Chapter, we proceed to consider the nature of actual sin, and its punishment. Sin is a transgression of the law of God. To understand the true nature of sin, we must therefore be acquainted with the law, and its requirements.

By the law of God is meant his will to his creatures.

The law of God may be known partially from the light of nature. Man in his original state had the divine law written or impressed upon his heart; or, in other words, his reason, his conscience, and his feelings, taught him what was right, and what was wrong, in relation to his Creator, and all the creatures with which he was acquainted. By his fall and apostasy, his reason and conscience became greatly defaced, though not entirely erased. Hence, the apostle says, Rom. ii. 14, 15: "When the Gentiles, which have not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the works of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another." Although we may obtain some knowledge of the law from the light of nature; yet the mind of man has become so blinded by his fall, that the knowledge which he derives from this source is but very imperfect. Hence, we learn the necessity of an explicit revelation from God, to teach men his law, and their duty. This revelation is contained in the holy Scriptures, in which God has made known his law clearly to mankind. The commandments of God, revealed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, are either moral or positive. Those laws which are founded in the reason and

fitness of things, and which it would be our duty to obey, though the things embodied in them had never been explicitly commanded, are called moral laws. Thus, the ten commandments are moral laws. Positive laws are those for which we can discover no reason, in the nature or fitness of things, but which depend, as far as we can see, entirely on the will of the Divine Lawgiver. Thus, for instance, the law given to our first parents to abstain from the fruit of the tree of knowledge was a positive precept; and likewise such were the precepts of the ceremonial law, generally, and the institution of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper. The moral laws are unchangeable, and perpetually binding; but the positive laws may be abrogated, and are binding only until they are repealed by the lawgiver; as was the case with the ceremonial law.

By the law of God, then, we understand the whole will of God, made known to us, as the rule of our duty, in whatever way it may be made known, whether by the light of nature, or by revelation; and whatever the nature of the precepts may be, whether moral or positive.

We ought to notice particularly, that the law is spiritual; or, in other words, that the commandments of the law reach to the thoughts, volitions, desires, and every other exercise of the soul, as well as to the external actions; and also to the state or habit of the soul, requiring that the natural propensities and inclinations should be right.

Agreeably to the view which we take, of the law of God, we learn, that acting contrary to the plain dictates of the light of nature, is sin; that it is sin to violate any of the moral precepts of the law, or to neglect performing the positive commandments, which are still in force; and further, that all thoughts, desires, volitions, affections, motives, propensities and inclinations, and all other exercises of the soul, which, if they were acted out, would be a transgression of the law, or not perfectly conformed to it, are sins.

Original sin is the want of original righteousness, or, the want of a disposition to do that which is right, according to the

law of God; and the depravity of the whole nature, by which we are prone to all manner of evil.

Actual sin, is the actual transgression of the law of God; or, the doing that which is wrong, or neglecting that which is right. Actual sins may be distinguished into sins against God, against our neighbour, and against ourselves—into sins of thought, word, and deed. Sins of omission consist in leaving those things undone which ought to be done. Sins of commission, are those which are committed against affirmative precepts, or doing what should not be done. Sins of infirmity, are those which arise from the infirmity of the flesh, from ignorance, surprise or temptation. Secret sins, are those committed in secret; and presumptuous sins, are those which are done boldly, and against light and conscience. There is one sin, which is commonly called the unpardonable sin, to the consideration of which I call your particular attention. This sin is mentioned in Matt. xii. 31, and in Mark xxviii. 30. From the preceding parts of these passages, we learn that our Lord had performed a miracle on one possessed with a devil. The Pharisees ascribed this miracle to the prince of the devils, to Beelzebub. “Jesus knowing their thoughts, said unto them, every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?” In these, and the following passages, Christ vindicated himself, in relation to the miracle he had performed, and then, in the thirty-first verse, said; “Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven unto men, neither in this world, neither in the world to come”—32.

Hence we learn, that the sin against the Holy Ghost consisted in charging Christ with being in league with the devil; or in accusing him of working his miracles, not by the spirit or power of God, but by the aid of the prince of the devils. It was, therefore, a direct insult, abuse, and evil speaking against the Holy Ghost. That this was meant by this sin, at that time,

is evident from Mark iii. 30. "Because they said, he had an unclean spirit." All other sins, all manner of sin and blasphemy — all speaking against the Saviour himself, such as personal reflections cast upon him — calling him the carpenter's son — might be remitted; reflections on his poverty, humble birth, and the lowliness of his human nature, might be forgiven; but this sin was clearly against the Holy One; it was alleging that the highest displays of God's mercy and power were the work of the devil; it showed, therefore, the highest depravity of mind. It was accusing him of working miracles by the aid of the Devil — thus dishonouring the Holy Ghost.

It may be asked here, why is this sin said to be unpardonable? The reason why this sin is never forgiven, is not because of any want of sufficiency in the blood of Christ; nor in the pardoning mercy of God; but because such as commit it never repent of it, but continue obstinate and malignant until death. Again, it may be asked, whether this sin can be committed now? This is a delicate question, and should be carefully managed. We observe, that as the sin opposes the clearest and highest evidence that can be given, in favour of divine Revelation, and as persons now cannot be supposed to enjoy the highest evidence that can be given, we conclude that it cannot be easily committed now. However, if the evidence of the truth should have arisen in a man's mind, equal to the evidence which the miracles did, and were intended to produce; if the malice and opposition against God arise from a heart equally wicked and hardened as those of the Pharisees, and if the speaking is public, with a malicious design to oppose the Gospel, it will be, or come near that sin.

An anxious distress, arising from a fear of having committed this sin, is an evidence, that it has certainly not been committed. Wherever that sin is perpetrated, the spirit of God has departed, and the unhappy individual is given over. He cannot—he will not—it is impossible he should pray to God; and therefore that anxious distress, accompanied with prayer, are sufficient evidences that the sin has not been committed.

We proceed to consider the penal consequences of sin.

They are either temporal or eternal. All the miseries which we endure, or to which we are exposed, both in this world and in the next, are the consequences of sin, and may be arranged under the following heads: the miseries of this life; natural death; spiritual death; and eternal death.

The miseries of this life, such as national calamities, war, famine, and pestilence; individual calamities, losses and crosses, sickness, and pain of body; inward anxiety, and fear of mind, and the remorse and horrors of conscience; these, and all other miseries of the present life, are the consequences of sin.

Natural death, or the dissolution of the union between soul and body, is the consequence of sin. On account of sin, we are doomed to return unto the dust, whence we were taken. This doom was pronounced upon the human race, as soon as our great head and representative had transgressed. Rom. v. 12. Spiritual death, which is the loss of the image of God, and of communion with Him, is a consequence of sin. The image of God consisted in knowledge, righteousness and holiness. This image man has lost, and remains destitute of it, until renewed by divine grace. He is, as the apostle expresses it, "dead in trespasses and sins, alienated from God, and the life that is out of God." Eph. ii. 1. The last, and most dreadful punishment of sin, is eternal death, or eternal banishment from God, and from all happiness, into positive misery, in hell. This place of misery is represented, in Holy Scriptures, under a variety of figures and expressions — it is called a bottomless pit, and a lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. There, we are told, the lost sinner will be associated with the Devil and his angels; there, shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. There, the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. There, is blackness of despair. There, is no rest, day nor night. Such are the representations which the Scriptures give of the miseries of the lost, and of the punishment of sin. And what, beyond our comprehension, heightens this misery, is, that it is endless in its duration. The consideration of this subject, however, I shall pass over for the present, and resume again, at the close of this work.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ON THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

THE fall of man, and its fatal consequences, were the subjects of the preceding Chapters. Our attention will be next directed to consider his redemption.

That man has ruined himself, by his fall and disobedience, is evident both from the Scriptures and reason. Reason, however, may teach us that we are ruined, but it cannot discover to us a way of deliverance. The revealed Word of God teaches us, that there is a way of recovery for guilty man, from the ruin sin brought upon him. The covenant of works being broken, God has been pleased, in his infinite mercy, to reveal a new covenant, a covenant of grace, made in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The plan of redemption through a Redeemer, revealed in the Gospel, is called the Covenant of Grace, on account of its origin, and of the manner in which its benefits are communicated. The words, ברית, *berith*, in the Hebrew, and διαθηκη, in the Greek, are used in different senses. The word sometimes means an appointment, or constitution, as, for instance, when God speaks of his covenant with day and night; here, the idea of an agreement, or stipulation, must be entirely excluded. It means an appointment, or ordinance, when God said to Noah, "I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood, neither shall there be any more a flood to destroy the earth." Sometimes it means a promise, as when God is said to have made a covenant with Abraham, saying, "Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance." In the New Testament, the Greek word for covenant, signifies, a promise, a command, a religious dispensation, a covenant, and, sometimes, a testament. It is, however, not from the simple occurrence of

the Hebrew, or the Greek word, that we are to infer a federal transaction between God and man, or between any other parties, but from the circumstance of the case, which alone can determine in what sense the terms are employed. They may occur, in some passages, where no covenant is implied; and in others again, we may find a covenant to have been made, where neither of them is used to express it.

The existence of the covenant of grace, or that agreement relative to the salvation of sinners, into which God entered with his Son before the foundation of the world, may be inferred from the following considerations. Christ is called, in the Scriptures, a surety, which points him out as the representative of others, and as having come under an engagement to fulfil certain terms, in their name, and for their benefit. He is called the Second Adam, and a comparison is drawn between him and the first man, which implies, that he resembled the latter, in being a federal head, by whose conduct others are affected. It is often said of Christ, that he came into the world to do the Father's will, which imports that the Father had proposed a certain design to him, and that he had undertaken to accomplish it. This transaction between the Father and the Son, is further evident, from the promise of a glorious reward to the Son; thus we read in Is. liii. 10; "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." Here we have a condition and a promise.

That this transaction took place before the creation of the world, is evident from the words of an apostle, that "eternal life was promised before the foundation of the world." A promise always supposes some person to whom it is made; and as the human race had then no existence, it must have been made to Christ, as the head and representative of his people. But how, it may be asked, could a covenant have been made between the Father and the Son, anterior to the beginning of time, and before our Lord became incarnate? Does not the transaction suppose, not only two distinct persons, but two distinct wills, and does not Scripture teach us that they are, in

essence, numerically one? This objection will be of no weight, if we believe and admit a plurality of persons in the Deity. If we admit that there are distinct persons in the Godhead, we must also admit that the attributes of a person belong to each, understanding and will. The Father has a will, and the Son has a will, else they would be in every respect the same. The union of these two wills, as it regards the salvation of men, and the means of its accomplishment, is that covenant, which we are considering.

The parties in this covenant are the Father and the Son. In speaking of the divine transaction between the Father and the Son, we must avoid, as much as possible, all such ideas and expressions as bear too close an analogy to the thoughts and proceedings of men. We must not degrade the subject by a too familiar illustration. But, as we cannot understand a divine transaction without reference to a human transaction, to which it bears some resemblance, we must endeavour to explain it by reference to a human agreement. When two individuals enter into a covenant, one of them makes a proposal to the other, who, immediately, or after deliberation, accedes to it. But, as there is no succession of thoughts in the divine persons, as they are not limited in their views, and are not capable of a gradual accumulation of ideas, we must not imagine that, in the present case, the proposal preceded the consent, in the order of time; or that it was the proposal of the one party which turned the attention of the other to the subject, and gained his consent. A single and harmonious act of the persons of the Trinity was sufficient to form and to ratify all those purposes which are executed in time. The parties, then, in this covenant are the Father and the Son. The Father proposed to the Son to take upon himself the work of man's redemption, and do every thing requisite to render it consistent with his divine perfections to save sinners. It was his will that he should assume human nature; that he should suffer and die; that he by his sufferings and death might fulfil the law, satisfy divine justice, and make reconciliation for sin. The Father promised to the Son to sustain, to keep, and uphold

him in his unparalleled sufferings. He promised that, after he had completed the work of man's redemption, he should see his seed, justify many, have a portion with the great, divide the spoil with the strong, raise up the tribes of Jacob, be a light to the Gentiles, and have the Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. Isaiah lii. 4—6; Is. liii. 10, 11, 12; Is. xlix. 6; Ps. xlvi. The Son acceded to these propositions of his Father, and agreed to do his will, as is written in the fortieth Psalm, quoted by the apostle, and applied to Christ in the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. "Lo, I come! in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God! yea, thy law is within my heart." In accordance with this agreement between the Father and the Son, when the Son drew near the end of the course of his obedience and sufferings, he claimed the stipulated reward, saying to his Father: "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Such was the covenant between the Father and Son, called the covenant of grace. In consequence of what the Son had done to redeem lost man, by making his soul an offering for sin, the Father graciously engaged to pardon, and receive into eternal life all who should believe in him.

The Holy Ghost, who approved of the whole scheme of redemption, and of every article in the covenant, is sent to bring all those given to Christ to a saving knowledge of the Saviour, and union with him, and in him, to the possession of all the benefits of his mediation.

The covenant by which men are saved is one, and was made with Christ before the foundation of the world. Many divines make a distinction between what they call the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace. The covenant of redemption, they say, was made from eternity; but the covenant of grace is made in time;—the parties in the former are God and his Son; the parties in the latter are God and sinners. The covenant of redemption is the agreement between

the Divine persons, and the condition of it the righteousness of Christ. The covenant of grace is the agreement which God makes with sinners in the gospel, promising them spiritual and eternal blessings, upon the condition of faith.

There does, however, not appear to be any ground in the Scriptures for this distinction. The blood of Christ is called "the blood of the covenant," not "of the covenants." What some call the covenant of grace, is merely the administration of what they call the covenant of redemption, for the purpose of communicating its blessings to those for whom it was intended. It is true, that it is frequently spoken of as a covenant, and is said to be made with men themselves. "I will make with you an everlasting covenant." Is. lv. 3. "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, in those days, saith the Lord." Heb. viii. 10. "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. But still, I think that the covenant by which we are saved is one, whether we call it the covenant of redemption, or the covenant of grace; and that what some call the covenant of grace, is nothing but the dispensation by which the benefits that Christ purchased by his obedience and death are imparted to believers.

In explaining the nature of the covenant of grace, it may be asked, whether it is conditional? In reply, I observe, that, in a certain sense, in so far as the bestowing of the blessings of the covenant on sinners depends on the obedience and death of Christ, and are imparted to them on account of his obedience and sufferings; and as he having fulfilled the requirements of the Father, so that he may claim his right to extend its blessings to all whom the Father hath given him; the covenant of grace was strictly conditional.

In another sense, as it respects the sinner, when the question is asked; whether he can do, or perform any thing by which he may claim the benefits of the covenant, we answer in the negative. Nothing done by man can, in the least degree, be the meritorious and procuring cause of his salvation; even faith and repentance, which are sometimes called the conditions of

the covenant, are themselves, really, the promises of the covenant, and the free gift of God. We do, however, see no impropriety in calling faith a condition of the covenant, so long as we do not attach anything meritorious to the act of faith; but consider it merely as the means of obtaining salvation, offered in the Gospel. They that differ on this point, differ not in sentiment; but merely in language.

The conditions of the covenant, as they relate to Christ, the head and representative, and the promises made to him by his Father, on condition of his perfect obedience to the precepts of the law, and his satisfactory sufferings, we have just noticed.

The conditions of the covenant, in relation to his people, in order that they may become interested in the blessings he purchased for them, are; repentance, faith, and holiness; and the promises are; the pardon of their sin; the sanctification of their persons; their preservation in a state of grace; and eternal life in the world to come.

The covenant of grace contains most glorious promises; but does it contain threatenings? There are, indeed, many threatenings contained in the Word of God, against despisers and neglecters of the covenant; as in John iii. 19; "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness, rather than light;" and Heb. ii. 3; "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

But, properly speaking, the covenant does not contain any threatenings; these threatenings belong to the law. It is the law that requires man to receive, with a true faith, all that God has revealed; and therefore requires faith in the Gospel, and pronounces the curse, and eternal death, on all who do not accept of the terms of salvation.

The covenant of grace was made with Christ, as we have already mentioned, and as we learn from 6 Tim. i. 9. Immediately after the fall, it was revealed to our first parents, in the promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. In succeeding ages, it was more clearly unfolded, and exhibited by promises, sacrifices, types, ordinances and prophecies, until, in the fulness of time, the Saviour appeared in the

flesh. Under the New Testament, it is administered in the preaching of the Gospel, baptism, and the Lord's Supper; in which grace and salvation are held forth in more full evidence and efficacy to all nations. But both under the Old and New Testament, the mediator, the whole substance, blessings, and manner of obtaining an interest in them by faith, are the very same, without any difference. When Christ appeared in the flesh, the manner of dispensing the covenant was changed; but the covenant itself remained the same. To conclude, it behoves every man to examine himself, whether he is interested in the blessings of this covenant, by repentance and faith in Christ. Happy, thrice happy he, who perceives in himself the evidences of his interest in the covenant! But, woe to that man, who refuses to comply with the terms of salvation, offered to him so freely, and so mercifully!

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ON THE MESSIAHSHIP OF JESUS.

FROM the concluding part of the preceding Chapter, we learned, that the Saviour was promised to our first parents, immediately after the fall, who should appear, in the fulness of time, to restore man to his original happiness and glory. His mission was deferred for wise purposes. It seemed good to Infinite Wisdom, to give, beforehand, such information respecting him, as would support the faith and hope of his people, and enable them to know him, when he should really appear.

The first promise of the Saviour, given to our primitive parents, in paradise, immediately after the fall, is contained in that remarkable passage, Gen. iii. 15, in which it was promised that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. The seed of the woman is Christ, the Messiah, as appears from an equivalent expression, used by the apostle, in Gal. iv. 4; "In

the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." The serpent is the Devil, who, by the instrumentality of that animal, tempted our first parents. Christ, the Messiah, bruised the serpent's head by destroying the works and the power of the Devil.

The next notice of the Messiah was given to Abraham, when God said to him; "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Gen. xxii. 18. By the term seed, we are to understand Christ, as appears from the words of Paul; Gal. iii. 16; "Now to Abraham, and his seed, was the promise made. He saith not, and unto seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ."

From this promise, we learn that the Messiah would not only be a man, a partaker of the same nature with the patriarch, but that he should be a Jew; because it is expressly said, that "In Isaac this seed should be called," or that he should spring from Abraham, not by Ishmael, but by Isaac.

Another remarkable prediction, we find recorded in the following words of the patriarch Jacob: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall be the gathering of the people." Gen. xlix. 10. It is generally agreed, among Christians, that the Messiah is the person to whom this prophecy refers; although there is a difference of opinion, with respect to the import of the name, by which he is described. Some suppose that שִׁלֹחַ, *Shiloh*, signifies; he that is sent; others, that it signifies; the peaceable one, or the giver of peace. The German translation has rendered it, "Der Held." This prediction will come again under review in the subsequent part of this Chapter.

The passage we find recorded in the one hundred and thirty-second of the Psalms, verse 11, is worthy of notice: "The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it: of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne." In these words the family is pointed out which should have the honour of claiming him as one of its members. The person spoken of is the same whom the Jews welcomed, as the descendant of David, when he entered Jerusalem, with this acclamation,

“Hosannah to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Matt. xxi. 9. There is a manifest allusion to this passage in the words of the angel, who announced the birth of our Saviour to his mother: “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of David for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” Luke i. 32, 33. Christ the Messiah was to be not only a member of the family of David, but to be born of a virgin, of one of the daughters of David, in a miraculous manner: “Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” Is. vii. 14. It may be asked here, why was Christ born in a miraculous manner? and what is the reason that the human nature of our Saviour was so different from that of all other men? The commonly received opinion is, that the holiness of his nature was the consequence of his being born of a virgin.

In consequence of the federal relation between Adam and his posterity, it is said that his sin is chargeable upon them, and is transmitted to them as they come successively into the world; all men, therefore, come into the world in a state depraved and corrupted. In the representation of Adam, every individual of the human race was included, who was to be born according to the law of generation then established. Had our Lord been born according to the same law, he also would have partaken of the general corruption; and being himself a sinner, could not have been the Saviour of sinners. The design, then, of his miraculous conception was to secure the innocence of his human nature, that it might be fitted for the high honour of union with his divine person; and for the purpose of securing the salvation of man, in the performance of those holy services which his salvation required.

But we are rather inclined to believe, that the reason of the purity of the human nature of our Saviour was not owing simply to his being born of a virgin; but to his not being included in the representation of Adam. As all were included in it who were derived from him by the ordinary mode of continuing the species, it was necessary, in order to distinguish

our Lord, who never was in Adam as a federal head, that he should descend from him in a miraculous manner.

Christ the Messiah was made known in the beginning, and in after ages, not only as it respects his human character, but likewise in reference to his Godhead. His divinity is declared in the following passages: as, Is. ix. 6; Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. There are many other predictions and declarations contained in the Old Testament, in respect to his person, the work he was to perform, to his humiliation, his sufferings, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, his power, the progress and final triumph of his religion. But passing these, at present, I observe, that the Jews expected the Messiah as a great deliverer, who should appear in a future age to accomplish the redemption of his people. He was known by various names and titles, and especially as the Messiah, the Anointed One. The Jews, however, had very erroneous ideas of the person and character of the Messiah, at the time of his appearance. They imagined that he would be a mere man; they had lost sight of the prophetic descriptions of his sufferings, and fixed their attention merely on what is said of him as a triumphant conqueror;—they expected, therefore, a temporal monarch, and were ready to march under his banners to victory and glory. Hence, when the Messiah did come, they rejected him, and would not have him to rule over them.

We proceed to prove that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah. The time fixed by prophecy for his appearance is past; and hence we conclude that he has long since appeared.

Let us again refer to the prophecy which Jacob delivered on his death-bed; Gen. xlix. 10; “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come.” By Shiloh was meant the Messiah, as is acknowledged by the ancient Jewish interpreters. The sceptre was a badge of authority. Hence, the meaning is, that the tribe of Judah should have authority until the Messiah should come. But the sceptre has departed from Judah—the civil constitution of the Jews has been overthrown, and for many ages they have remained without a priest or king. The sceptre departed when they became tributary to the Romans, and a Roman governor

was appointed to rule over them; and soon after, when the nation was conquered, and the city of Jerusalem destroyed by Titus, the Roman general, they ceased to be a distinct nation, and were scattered throughout the world, without any form of government, civil laws, or rulers of their own. From the exact fulfilment of this prophecy, it is evident that the promised Messiah must have long since come.

It was predicted that he should come while the second temple was standing: "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts." Hagg. ii. 9. A prophecy of similar import is recorded Malachi iii. 1. "The Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts."

According to the prophecy of Haggai, the glory of the second temple, which was then building, was to exceed that of the first, when the desire of all nations, the Messiah, should appear. The glory of the second temple certainly was not superior to the first. In external ornaments it was far inferior to the first. Besides, the second temple wanted many things, which were the glory of the first, viz: the *schechinah*, the ark of the covenant, the Urim and Thummim, the holy fire, and the holy anointing oil. The greater glory of the second temple consisted alone in this, that the desire of all nations was come into it, to dignify it with his presence. As this temple has long since been destroyed, so that not one stone has been left upon another, the necessary conclusion is, that the promised Messiah is come.

There is a very remarkable prophecy in the book of Daniel, which fixes the time of his appearance, with greater exactness. Dan. ix. 24-27. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon the holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in an everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most High. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the

Prince shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off; but not for himself. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week."

In this prophecy, the Messiah is expressly designated by name; the length of time, until he should appear to accomplish the work of reconciliation, is definitely pointed out, namely, seventy weeks; and a precise time is mentioned, from which we are to date these weeks. By these seventy weeks, in this prophecy, according to the universal opinion of Christian writers, we are to understand weeks of years, amounting, in all, to four hundred and ninety years.

The beginning of these weeks must be dated from some decree to restore and build Jerusalem, which, at the time of delivering the prediction, lay in ruins. History informs us of four decrees, issued by the Persian kings, for this purpose. The first, in the first year of the reign of Cyrus; the second, in the early part of the reign of Darius Hystaspis; the third, in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus; and the fourth, in the twentieth year of the reign of the same king. Different opinions have been entertained with respect to the commencement of these seventy years; the most general opinion is, that they commenced with the decree given to Ezra, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, when a decree went forth from that monarch to restore the nation and church of the Jews. The seven weeks, or forty-nine years, extend from that period to the time of Nehemiah, when the walls of Jerusalem were finished, and the affairs of the nation were settled. The sixty-two weeks, or four hundred and thirty-four years, fill up the interval between Nehemiah, and the appearance of John the Baptist; and the one week, or the last seven years, were employed in the ministration of John and our Saviour. In the course of that week, or in the latter half of it, he made the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, by his own death, which fulfilled the types, and abolished the ceremonial law.

It is evident, from this prophecy, and its accurate fulfilment, that the Messiah, who was to come about the end of these seventy weeks, has long since come.

That the Messiah, whose advent is past, is Jesus of Nazareth, is further evident, from the exact correspondence between his character and history, and the particulars mentioned in prophecy.

He was to be of the tribe of Judah, and the family of David. Gen. xlix. 10. He was to have a forerunner, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, xl. 3. The place where he was to be born, is mentioned in prophecy; Micah v. 2. The prophets foretold the character, the sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ Jesus — 53. Ps. xvi. 10; Ps. lxxviii. 18; cx. 1. All these predictions were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth; which appears from the history of the New Testament, the truth of which history is supported by undeniable arguments, and confirmed by the testimony of many credible witnesses, who laid down their lives to seal their testimony with their blood. Hence we conclude, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah that was to come according to the prophecies of the Old Testament.

The messiahship of Jesus is farther manifest, from the wonderful works which he performed. It was foretold that his coming should be accompanied with great and beneficent works. Is. xxxv. 4-6. The Jews expected, that when the Messiah came, he would exhibit such signs, whereby they might know him, as we learn from the words of some who believed in him, who said; "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these, which this man hath done?" John vii. 31. The miracles which Christ performed proved him to be the Messiah; because they were express attestations to his character, by his Father, in concurrence with whom he performed them. Christ himself appeals to them as proofs of his heavenly mission: "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works, that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me." John v. 36, 37.

And again, on another occasion, he said to the Jews: "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him." John x. 37, 38. Whether we consider these works as performed

by the power of the Saviour himself, or by that of his Father, they were, in both instances, solemn attestations to the mission and doctrine of Christ, and prove him to be the promised Messiah.

The last argument by which we prove that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, is the wonderful establishment, success, and progress of the religion which he founded. The astonishing success of his religion in the world, is a strong proof of his divine mission.

If we consider the Author of the Christian religion, his low and humble condition, and his ignominious death; if we reflect on the nature of the doctrine he taught; if we call to mind the instruments employed in propagating his doctrine, and the opposition it met with from all characters, classes, and ranks of men; if we consider, further, that notwithstanding all these difficulties, it triumphed, and was established, and has been continued in the world ever since, we are constrained to acknowledge that the almighty power of God was exerted in its favour; whereby he has owned the divine mission of its Author, and therefore he was, what he professed himself to be, the promised Messiah.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST.

HAVING proved that Christ is the true Messiah, our next subject will be the consideration of his person.

As some consider him a mere man, in every respect like ourselves, and maintain that there was no distinction between him and other men, except in his superior endowments and splendid achievements, it is of the utmost importance that we become acquainted with his true character. According to the

declarations of the prophets, and the expectation of the ancient people of God, the redeemer of Israel should be one who might be called "Jehovah, our righteousness," and "Immanuel," which signifies God with us. The Scriptures of the New Testament are still more plain and pointed, as it respects the person of the Redeemer. They inform us, that it was the word, the *logos*, who "was God," and "by whom all things were created," that was "made flesh, and dwelt among us;" that it was the Son of God, who was made of a woman; and that he who came from the Jews according to the flesh, was "God over all," — "God manifested in the flesh," — "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." John i. 1-14; Rom. ix. 5; 1 Tim. iii. 16; Heb. ii. 14, 16, 17. From these, and many other passages of Scripture, we learn, that the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, assumed human nature into union with his divine. This union was so made, as to constitute but one person, the God-man, Jesus Christ; and, at the same time, it was so made, that the two natures are not confounded, but remain distinct.

The doctrine that Christ Jesus, the Son of God, assumed human nature in union with his divine, is an essential article of our religion; and hence has been opposed with great violence, in every age; and by heretics of various descriptions: We learn from church history, that, in the primitive times of Christianity, there were two opinions invented, which were in opposition to the common faith of Christians, founded on the authority of Scripture. The first, is that of the Docetæ, the followers of Julius Cassianus, who taught that our Saviour was not a man in reality, but in appearance only, and that what was supposed to be the man Christ Jesus, was a mere phantom, and his crucifixion, a scenical representation, by which the senses of the spectators were imposed upon.

This opinion is scarcely worthy of notice, much less, of an attempt to refute it, because it is manifestly contrary to the most explicit declarations of Scripture: "Forasmuch," says an apostle, "as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also, himself, took part of the same." Heb. ii. 14.

The second opinion, destructive of the human nature of

Christ, was maintained by Arius, and Eunomius, a leader of a branch of Arians, who taught that he had a body, but not a soul; and that the *logos*, or his superior nature, supplied its place. Apollinaris, also, denied the proper humanity of Christ, and maintained, that the body which he assumed, was endowed with a sensitive, and not a rational soul, but that the divine nature, or the *logos*, supplied the place of the intellectual principle in man. Human nature he considered to consist of three parts; a body, a soul, and a mind; of which the latter was wanting, in our Saviour.

These opinions, especially those which affirm that Christ had no soul, are entirely opposed to Scripture. The Scripture informs us that Christ, in his agony, exclaimed, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" Matt. xxvi. 38; and when dying on the cross, he committed it to his Father. Christ, according to the Scriptures, possessed a human understanding, Luke ii. 52; a human will, John vi. 38; and human affections, as love and joy, Luke viii. 21. How was it possible that the Divine nature could be in him, instead of a soul? Is not the Divine nature omniscient? and were there not some things of which Christ declared himself to be ignorant? and how could his sufferings, and fears, and sorrows, be consistent with the perfect felicity of which the Divine nature is immutably possessed? Can we conceive the Divine nature to be in agony, and to have exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

In opposition to those unscriptural and erroneous opinions we maintain, that our Redeemer assumed a complete human nature; or, as our Catechism expresses it: "God's eternal Son, who is, and continueth true and eternal God, took upon him the very nature of man, of the flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, that he might also be the true seed of David, like unto his brethren in all things, sin excepted."

The human nature of Christ was not exempt from the sinless infirmities of our nature, such as hunger and thirst, cold and heat, weariness, pain of body, arising from external injuries; and to distress of mind, on certain occasions, when his feelings

were affected by the scenes with which he was surrounded. It was by his tears, and agony, and death, that the great work of our redemption could be accomplished; and that he, submitting to our infirmities, might acquire an experimental knowledge of our sufferings, that we might be fully assured of his sympathy when we suffer. But Christ was not subject to the sinful infirmities of our nature; he was not subject to sensual appetites, and transports of passion; nor was there any stimulus to sin in the constitution or temperament of his body; nor was his body exposed to any of those diseases which are the portion of man on account of sin. "He was tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. iv. 15.

The assumption of our nature by the Son of God is expressed in the Scriptures by "his partaking of our flesh and blood;" by his "being made flesh," and by "his being manifested in the flesh." He assumed not a human person, but a human nature; or, in other words, made it his own nature, by giving it a subsistence in his divine person. It would have been a person, if it had not been united to the Son of God; but, being united to him, it cannot be called a person, because it does not subsist by itself as other men do; each of whom has an independent existence. Neither is his person made up of two constituent parts, the divine and human nature; for this would imply that the Son of God was not a divine person before the union; or that he became a different person after it. The human nature is so united with the divine, that each retains its own essential properties distinct. The divine nature can receive no alteration; and it is impossible that the humanity can receive the impressions of the Deity, so as to be changed into it. There is, indeed, a change made in the humanity, by its being advanced to a more exalted union, but not in the Deity; as a change is made in the air, when it is enlightened by the sun; but not in the sun, which communicates that brightness to the air. The human nature is not swallowed up by the divine, nor changed or confounded with it; but they are so united, that the properties of both remain firm: two are so become one, that they remain still two, one person in two natures, containing the glorious perfections of the Deity, and

the weakness of the humanity. The fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Christ.

To be more particular on this important subject, I would further observe, that the union of the two natures in Christ is not an *essential* union, like the persons in the Godhead are united; for then there would be one essence or nature, and two persons in Christ; whereas, we find two natures in Christ, and only one person. "There is but one mediator, as there is but one God." 1 Tim. ii. 5. Again, the union of the two natures is not a *physical* union, as the soul and body are united in man, which, being physically united to each other, make one person; but Christ was a person before he became man. Death dissolves the union between the soul and body; but this is indissoluble; so that after he was crucified, and his body interred, both soul and body were as much united to the second person as ever. Neither is this union a *relative* union, as exists between Christ and believers; for then there would be two persons and two natures in Christ; and though believers are said to be in Christ, and Christ in them, yet they are not one person with him.

We maintain, then, that this union was a *personal* and *hypostatical* union. The second person in the Godhead took the human nature into a personal union with himself, by virtue of which the manhood subsisted in the second person, yet without confusion, as we have shown already, both making one person, "Immanuel, God with us." Though there is a twofold nature in Christ, yet not a double person. The human nature never subsisted separately and distinctly by any personal subsistence of its own, as it doth in other men; but, from the first moment of conception, subsisted in union with the second person in the adorable Trinity, in a miraculous and extraordinary manner.

The incarnation was a personal act, not an act of the divine nature, but an act of a person in that nature, and, therefore, terminated upon that person alone. The whole divine nature may be said to be incarnate; but this is true only because the whole divine nature is in the second person of the Godhead;—and if the divine nature is in all the persons of the Trinity, we cannot understand how the incarnation was the act of one,

and not of all. The reason is, that we do not understand in what their personal distinction consists; yet we are certain that there is such a distinction, in consequence of which some acts are ascribed to one person, and others to another; and, in particular, that it was the Son of God who became incarnate, and not the Father, or the Holy Ghost, although both concurred in this act:—the Father, by his appointment and approbation; and the Holy Ghost, by his immediate agency in the miraculous conception.

The doctrine of our religion, concerning the person of Christ, was opposed by two heresies, in the fifth century.

The first was the opinion of Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, who taught that there are two persons in Christ, a divine, and a human. This opinion was condemned by the great council of Ephesus, in the year 431. In opposition to this heresy, it was determined, that the union of the two natures was *αδιαίρετος*, “indivisible,” and *αγώγιστος*, “insuperable;” and thus, that there were not two divisible and separable persons in the Mediator.

The other was the heresy of Eutyches, Abbot of Constantinople, who acknowledged two natures in Christ, before the union, but after the union, only one nature. His opinion seems to have been, that the human nature was absorbed by the divine, and that the divine nature alone remained. He did not, however, specify the time when the union took place; but some of his followers said, that it took place at the conception; some, at the resurrection; and some, at the ascension. He was condemned, for this opinion, in the general council of Chalcedon, in the year 451; and, in order to illustrate this union, it was maintained that the nature of this union was, *ατρεπτος*, and *ασυγχυτος*, “without change and confusion.”

And, indeed, the distinction of the two natures, in Christ, was manifest while he lived upon earth. As God, he knew all things, but, as man, there were some things which he did not know; as God, he was blessed for ever; but, as man, he was acquainted with grief; as God, he was the living One; but, as man, he died upon the cross. That this distinction is continued in the heavenly state, is certain, from the fact, that “he will so

come in like manner as he was seen to go into heaven;" Acts i. 11; that is, he will return in the human nature, as it is ordained, that by him God will judge the world in righteousness.

Let us now attend to the effects of the constitution of his person. The first is the communication of properties, called, by the Greeks, *κοινωνια ιδιωμάτων*, by which is meant, that, in consequence of the two natures, the properties of both are ascribed to his person. Not that the divine attributes are communicated to the manhood, for the manhood is not capable of divine attributes, which would deify it; but it must be so understood, that the person of the Mediator doth perfectly possess the properties of the divine and human natures; so, that what is proper to him, with respect to his person, is ascribed to him, with respect to the one, or the other of his natures. For instance, we may say, of his person, that Christ is eternal, was born in time, is our righteousness; with respect to his divine nature, we can say that Christ, who is God, is infinite; "the Lord of glory was crucified; God hath bought his church with his own blood." 1 Cor. ii. 8; Acts xx. 28. We may say, also, with respect to his human nature, that Christ, the man, died, is in heaven, John iii. 13; is mediator, 1 Tim. ii. 5. All which phrases are unintelligible, without a respect to this personal union. But we cannot use these expressions in the abstract, and say that the Godhead of Christ was crucified — that his manhood was in heaven, while he was on earth, because then the Godhead would necessarily be the manhood, and the manhood the Godhead.

The second effect of the constitution of his person, is the communion of the works and actions of both natures; by which we mean that both natures co-operate in that one person in the same work of redemption; so that we have here a working person of the Mediator, a work of redemption, and a twofold principle, his divine and human nature, which do each contribute their proper share to the work of redemption — the humanity suffers, and the Godhead adds an infinite value to it. Acts xx. 28. Whence, it is readily understood, that he is Mediator according to both natures.

The third effect of this union is, that many glorious gifts and

graces are communicated to the manhood; and particularly, that it is dignified with a personal union with the Godhead, and is, in consequence of this, become endued with exalted wisdom, perfect holiness, power and dignity, above all men and angels. Luke i. 35; John iii. 34; Ps. xlv. 7; Philip. iii. 6-9.

The last effect of the hypostatical union, which I shall mention, is the adoration of the person of Christ. The human nature, although glorified beyond conception, is not the formal object of worship, because it is a creature. We worship him, who is God-man; but we worship him, because he is God. We pray to him, because, as God, he hears and helps us; we wait on him, and obey him, because he is possessed of divine power and authority.

A question, connected with the person of Christ, may be asked, namely, whether he is the object of worship as Mediator? Christians, indeed, usually pray to the Father, and address Him, by the Son, and plead his blessings on account of his merits; yet prayer may be addressed to the Son; because he is also God, who ought, by the express command of the Father, to receive the same honour from men, with himself. Although we usually pray in the name of the Mediator, yet, I am not sure, that exact attention to this distinction is absolutely necessary, in practice; or, that it is always observed by Christians. We often address him, as our Saviour and intercessor; and there are many passages, in Holy Scripture, which sanction this practice. No doubt, John thought of him as Mediator, when he uttered this doxology: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins, in his own blood; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." Rev. i. 5, 6. And is he not considered in the same character by the church, when it says: "Worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and blessing." Rev. v. 12. When we pronounce the apostolic benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all;" 2 Cor. 13, 14; do we not, in these words, address him as a distinct person from the Father, and a distinct agent in the work of our

salvation, and consequently, as the Mediator to whom is committed the dispensation of the grace of the new covenant?

We all acknowledge that we ought to love the Mediator — to trust in him — to commit our souls to him, and yield implicit obedience to his law. How, then, can there be any hesitation about the propriety of addressing our prayers to him? Certainly, we shall not err, if we humbly and devoutly obey the command, which was long given to the church respecting the Messiah; “He is thy Lord: worship thou him.” Ps. xlv. 11.

I shall conclude this Chapter by illustrating the question, why it was requisite that our Mediator should be such a person as we have seen the Scriptures teach us; or, in other words, why it was necessary that he should be man and God, and God and man, in one person. This question is answered in the Heidelberg Catechism, as follows: It was necessary that the Mediator should be man, “because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which hath sinned should likewise make satisfaction for sin.” Quest. 16. The justice of God requires satisfaction of the sinner himself; but if God is pleased by a special mercy to transfer his demand to a surety, who should make satisfaction in the sinner’s stead, that surety must be of the same nature with the sinner, in order to become his surety. Hence, we see the reason why an angel, or the most exalted angelic being that surrounds the throne of God, could not be our mediator; and satisfy the demands of justice. An angel is not of the nature of man; neither can an angel suffer and die. But it was necessary for our surety, in order to meet the demands of justice and fulfil the law, that he should suffer and die in our room, which would have been impossible, had he not taken upon himself human nature. Gal. iv. 4, 5. It was further requisite that our mediator should be God, “That he might by the power of his Godhead sustain in his human nature the burthen of God’s wrath, and obtain and restore to us, righteousness and life.” Question 17. No mere creature could have sustained the wrath of God against sin. He, then, who should effect our salvation, by sustaining it, must be more powerful than all the creatures; in other words, he must be God, that he may support his human nature while he

suffers. The mediator and deliverer must also be God, "that he may obtain for us righteousness and life." The sinner, if he shall find favour in the sight of God, and live, must have an infinite righteousness, that all his sins committed against God may be forgiven him. Now, it is impossible that the righteousness of a mere creature should be of infinite value; he ought then himself to be the infinite God, if his righteousness shall have such a value. It behoved the Mediator to restore this righteousness and life, and communicate them to us. It was not enough to purchase them; but it was necessary to apply them. "The Shepherd, who laid down his life for his sheep," must also give them eternal life, and keep them, so that they shall never perish, and that none shall pluck them out of his hands. John x. 11, 28; and, therefore, the mediator must be God, for a man could not apply to himself the righteousness which he purchased, and the life which he merited. There is need here of an "exceeding greatness of power, according to the working of his mighty power." Ephes. i. 19.

It was necessary that our Mediator should be God and man in one person. For, as we have mentioned, the human nature of itself cannot sustain the wrath of God, and its sufferings cannot be of infinite value; and as the incorruptible Godhead cannot suffer: therefore, his Godhead must have its proper human nature, in order to suffer in that nature; and the human nature and the Godhead must be united, that the Godhead may support the human nature under its sufferings, and that its sufferings may be of infinite dignity and value, being "the blood of God," Acts xx. 28; and "the blood of the Son of God." 1 John i. 7.

We cannot say that there could be two mediators: the one man, who should suffer, and the other God, that he might add infinite dignity and worth to the human sufferings of the other; for no human sufferings can ever be of infinite value, unless the suffering person himself be also God, and suffer in his own humanity.

From this subject, we see the wonderful condescension and love of God. What infinite love was it that the Father should give his only begotten Son, for our salvation, to be humbled to

a union with our nature! And what infinite love and condescension was it in the Son of God, that he should stoop so low, as to be made flesh, and take the nature of us, his creatures, degraded by sin, into such a close union with his divine nature! No wonder that the incarnation of the Son of God filled angels with praise, when, at Bethlehem, they celebrated his birth, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Luke ii. 14. In view of this subject, human nature appears dignified. Our nature was degraded by sin; but, by the incarnation of Christ, it has been raised to a dignity, may we not say superior even to the angelic nature? Let us be thankful for the honour which has been put upon human nature; and let us endeavour, by a holy life, to live in some measure agreeably to this dignity conferred upon our nature.

CHAPTER XL.

ON THE PROPHETICAL OFFICE OF CHRIST.

THE incarnation of Christ was the subject of the preceding Chapter. From various passages of Holy Scripture, we learn that he, the Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, assumed human nature into union with his divine, which union was so made as to constitute one person, the God-man, Jesus Christ; and that the two natures are not confounded, but remain distinct. Further, that it was necessary that our Mediator should be such a person; namely, that he should be man and God, and God and man in one person.

We proceed to consider the offices which Christ, our mediator, performed.

Our Saviour is called in the Old Testament the Messiah, and in the New Testament, the Christ; and both words import that he was the Anointed One. Under the former dispensation, it was customary to consecrate prophets, priests, and kings to their offices, by anointing them with oil. This signified that

the person thus anointed was set apart to office, and was a sign of the communication of qualifications for the performance of the duties of his office. This anointing was typical of the Saviour, and, in allusion to it, he was called the anointed, or Christ; signifying his separation to the work of Mediator, and his qualifications for this work. "He was anointed," says the Scripture, "with the Holy Ghost." Acts x. 38.

This anointing took place first at his conception, when he was sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and endowed with all the graces which can adorn human nature, and with those faculties which, being afterwards developed, excited admiration even in the early part of his life; for at the age of twelve he astonished the doctors of Jerusalem by his wisdom, both in asking, and answering their questions. Secondly, at his baptism, when the heavens were opened upon him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon his head. This descent of the spirit, resting upon him in a visible form, in conjunction with the voice which proceeded from heaven, signified to all who were present, that God recognised him as his Son, and bestowed upon him an abundant measure of heavenly influences. In this manner, he was publicly invested with his office, and fitted for the discharge of its duties; and thus the remarkable prophecy was fulfilled which we find recorded. Is. xi. 2-5.

This anointing, however, relates only to the human nature of our Saviour; for his divine nature stood in need of no new qualification, and could receive no accession of gifts and graces; but his human nature possessed no excellence which was not imparted to it; was capable of progressive improvement, and actually grew in wisdom, as well as in stature and in favour with God and with men.

The offices to which our Mediator was anointed, were the prophetic, the sacerdotal, and the regal. His prophetic office is spoken of in Deut. xviii. 13. His sacerdotal, in Ps. cx. 4; and his regal office is described in Ps. xi. 6.

The prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices of our Mediator were indispensably necessary for the complete deliverance of his people from the circumstances in which they were placed.

They were involved in ignorance, guilt, and pollution. As prophet, he reveals to us the will and counsel of his heavenly Father, and thus removes and dispels our ignorance; as priest, he atones for our sins, and so removes our guilt; and as king, he delivers us from the bondage of depravity and all our enemies, sanctifies us, and restores us to the glorious liberty of the children of God.

The necessity of all these offices for the final and complete salvation of men, is pointed out in the words of Paul, recorded 1 Cor. i. 30.

We proceed to treat directly of his prophetic office.

A prophet, in Scripture, signifies one who foretells future events, and instructs the people in divine things. Christ, as a prophet, personally predicted future events; many of which have been fulfilled, and some remain yet to be accomplished. All the prophets, previous to his advent, were inspired by him to foretell the events which they predicted.

Christ exercises his prophetic office by means of his word, and by his spirit.

The exercise of his prophetic office may be considered in three distinct periods.

The first period extends from the fall to his birth; for, although he had not yet appeared in the flesh, he was the appointed Saviour, and as far as was consistent with his present state, he acted as mediator. It is generally supposed, and with good reason, that the divine person in human form, who frequently appeared, and delivered commands and promises to the patriarchs, was the same who proposed actually to take our nature in a future age. It is highly probable that it was he who promulgated the law from Sinai, who instituted the sacrifices, and who communicated the knowledge of future events, in respect to the predictions and types in whose person and by whom they were all fulfilled. Peter puts these suppositions beyond all doubt, and gives us explicit information that it was Christ, who, by his spirit, taught the prophets, commissioned and qualified them to give instructions suited to that age of the church. 1 Pet. i. 10, 11.

Hence it appears, that he executed his prophetical office, prior to his coming in the flesh.

The second period extends from the baptism of Christ, when he entered his public ministry, to his death. During this period, by his own personal ministry, he preached glad tidings, and revealed the will of God, and pointed out the way of salvation, far more clearly than had ever before been done. These instructions, which Christ gave to his disciples and others, we find fully recorded in the Gospels, to the perusal of which we would refer our readers, for further information.

The third period extends from the day of Pentecost, when he poured out the Holy Ghost on his disciples, to the end of the world. At the commencement of this period, he instructed the church, by extraordinary means. He inspired the apostles, and delivered to the world the revelations which were made to them by his spirit. By their ministry he continued to execute his prophetical office, as much as when he delivered the mysteries of the kingdom to his immediate followers, with his own lips. This is evident, from his words to them on the evening before his death. John xvi. 12-16. Hence, we see, that there is no difference, in respect to authority, between the doctrines of his apostles, and those delivered by himself. They are equally his doctrines. Neither is there any distinction to be made between the Gospels and Epistles; as if the former were a more certain rule of faith than the latter. The Epistles are the word of Christ, as much as the Gospels, for the writers were assisted by his spirit, in composing them: these, conjoined with the Gospels, complete the Christian revelation, as communicated to the world by Christ himself, and his accredited messengers.

From the close of revelation by the ministry of his apostles, Christ executes his prophetical office by ordinary means; that is, by the Scriptures, by his ministers, and by his spirit, whose agency, in the enlightening of the understanding, we shall afterwards consider. That he speaks to us, and continues to be the instructor of the ignorant, even now, in his state of exaltation, is evident from Heb. xii. 25: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for, if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from

him, that speaketh from heaven." And the apostle, in Eph. iv. 11-15, teaches us, that the system of ordinances, and ministers, and laws, instituted for the conversion and salvation of men, which have emanated from his authority, will be maintained, till its design is accomplished, in the perfection of every member of the church.

But what has Christ taught us, as a prophet? I reply, that there are a great many important truths, he taught men, contained in the Old and New Testament, as the rule of our faith and obedience. My design is not to give a summary of the doctrines he taught, as it would necessarily lead to a repetition of topics which have already been considered. I shall confine myself to a few particulars.

First, he has taught and illustrated certain truths which were but imperfectly known, such as the being of God, his providence and moral government, and the law which he has given for the regulation of our conduct. These truths were but imperfectly known among the nations which had not been favoured with revelation, and mingled with many errors. It was in consequence of his teaching — by his prophets among the Jews — and by his own ministry, when on earth — and afterwards, by his apostles, that the clouds of idolatry, superstition, and licentiousness, which hung over mankind, were dispersed; and men enlightened in the knowledge of the only true God — of his providence and government, and the duties we owe to God and man.

Secondly, he has established and confirmed, as certain, some truths which had been, previous to his advent, the subject of conjecture and uncertainty; I mean, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of existence. The common people, who did not reason on these points, believed them on the authority of their forefathers. Philosophers treated these subjects, and spoke of them, with much doubt and uncertainty; and their best arguments were without a solid foundation, fanciful, and too weak and slender to produce conviction; but Christ, our prophet, has "brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel." Coming from the invisible state, he has so far disclosed its secrets, as to assure us, that the soul shall survive

the death of the body, and will be consigned to bliss or woe, by the sentence of its Judge.

Thirdly, he has taught truths which were totally unknown before he had revealed them ; namely, the scheme of redemption, in all its parts. The Heathens entertained some notions of the placability of the Deity, and offered sacrifices to appease the anger of the gods, and to conciliate their favour ; but they could assign no satisfactory reason for their opinion, or their practice. They had received these notions from their fathers before them, and they followed them without being able to show that their hope had a solid foundation. Even their ancestors had not derived their ideas of the mercy of the Supreme Being, and the efficacy of sacrifices, from reason, but probably from revelation, of which some fragments, mixed with superstition, had been handed down to them by tradition.

Jesus Christ, as a prophet, has not only shed new light upon subjects of which men had some previous, but imperfect knowledge ; but he has revealed to us the grand scheme of redemption, which originated in the sovereign will of God. And, indeed, all the other knowledge which he has communicated to mankind would have been of no avail, if he had not revealed his Father to us as the God of love, and himself as the Saviour of sinners. What we wanted to know, was not merely that there is one God, but that he is propitious to his fallen creatures ; not merely that we should worship him, but how our services should be acceptable to him ; not merely that the soul is immortal, and that there is a future state of existence beyond the grave, but by what means we shall escape misery, and obtain eternal happiness. On all these important subjects he has given us full satisfaction.

It is true, Christ has said nothing on the subjects of science, politics, and the various arts by which life is sustained and adorned ; not because they are unimportant and useless, but because they bear no relation to the purpose of his mission. In the business of the present life, reason and experience are sufficient guides ; and the knowledge which is necessary for the purposes of practical use, may be obtained on these subjects by the exercise of those faculties with which our Creator has

endowed us. He has not given us so full an account of a future state as some men may deem desirable; and they may, therefore, look upon the want of it as a defect. Some persons, indeed, would be very fond of having graphical descriptions of heaven, and such a detail of the state of its inhabitants, and their employments, as we receive on their return from a foreign country, of the places which they have visited; but Christ, who could have given a faithful description of the invisible state, has not done it. He has contented himself with informing us that there is such a state, a place of rest for his followers, hereafter; and with a general account of the employments and happiness of those who are admitted into it. There is nothing to please the imagination; but enough to support our faith, to animate our hopes, to sustain us in adversity. If men will not be satisfied with these disclosures of a future state, and be excited to a life of piety and holiness, they would have continued equally insensible, and as much attached to earthly vanities, although they had a more minute and particular description of the future state beyond the grave.

Christ, as a prophet, is far superior to all other teachers. This will appear from some of the characters or properties by which his instructions were so eminently distinguished from others. He taught with perfect plainness and simplicity;—that is, he taught in such a manner as to be easily understood, by all who were willing to understand him; he used the plain, common language of mankind; and thus he distinguished himself in his instructions from the technical language customarily used by men of science, and extensively used at that period by all the votaries of the fashionable philosophy. The plainness of our Saviour's manner is conspicuous, in the obvious nature of his illustrations and allusions. As, the "city set on a hill; the salt of the earth; the candle, which is set not under a bushel, but on a candlestick; the vine, and the branches; the Shepherd and sheep;" are instances which will be remembered.

The plainness of our Saviour's teaching, is also remarkably apparent in his parables, by which he exhibited and illustrated the things belonging to the kingdom of heaven.

The simplicity of our Saviour's teaching is evident from the manner in which he illustrated his communications.

For instance: His sermon on the mount; his parabolic sermon, recorded Matt. xiii; several of his discourses with the Jews, recorded by John; those addressed to his disciples, John xiv; his intercessory prayer; the Lord's prayer; the parables of the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus, and the good Samaritan; the destruction of Jerusalem, and the final judgment.

Christ taught with the most perfect delicacy and modesty, and not like the Jewish and Heathen teachers, who were so remarkable for pride, vanity, and boasting. He never, in the most remote manner, in all his exhibitions of the truth, displayed the least indulgence of either pride or vanity. No resemblance of boasting can be found in all his discourses.

Christ taught with remarkable plainness and integrity. With what boldness did he attack the Pharisees and the Sadducees! With what uniformity and firmness did he oppose himself to the unsoundness of their wretched doctrines, the hypocrisy of their professions, and the irregularities of their lives, and with such pungency of reproof, that they shrunk back and were not able to withstand him! In the same manner he reproved and exposed all the popular prejudices of his country; and did not even spare his friends, when they stood in need of reproof.

Christ taught mankind with authority. "He taught," as Matthew expresses it, "as one having authority, and not as the Scribes." All the prophets of the Old Testament commenced their instructions with, "Thus saith the Lord." Christ never prefaced his instructions in this manner, but merely said, "I say unto you;" or, on solemn occasions, "Amen! Verily, I say unto you." Thus he is distinguished from all other teachers, both sacred and profane. The Apostles, it will be remembered, taught only in his name.

Christ taught with uniform and singular patience and kindness. With what patience did he bear the dulness, the prejudices, the ambition, and unbelief of his disciples! When Peter denied him so shamefully, the only reproof he gave him is recorded in the words, "And the Lord turned and looked upon

Peter." Over Jerusalem, the seat of so much guilt, where so many prophets were slaughtered, and which should soon be the scene of his own sufferings, he wept with inexpressible tenderness, and said, "How often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not."

Christ taught by his example. His life was a perfect practical comment on all he taught, and a perfect illustration of the nature and efficacy of his precepts. And here, again, he distinguished himself from the Heathen philosophers and Jewish Rabbis, whose example was often in contrast with their instructions.

The last property I shall mention, is the efficacy of his instructions. The efficacy of his instructions appears in the success which attended the preaching of his Gospel in the primitive ages. During his abode on earth, numbers believed in him and followed him; but after his ascension, notwithstanding the obstacles which were opposed to the Gospel, it spread with such rapidity during the lives of the Apostles, that it reached almost every part of the Roman empire, and even some nations lying beyond its frontiers; and after their decease, it continued to make progress, although its path was marked with blood, till the whole civilized world submitted to its sway.

The efficacy of the instructions of Christ is connected with the operations of grace; that is, as He teaches men by his word, so he also executes his prophetic office by the agency of his Holy Spirit upon their minds. The Scriptures, indeed, are said to be able to make men wise unto salvation; but their sufficiency consists solely in a complete exhibition of truth. Notwithstanding their fulness and clearness, they will make no man savingly wise, unless his understanding be opened to understand them, by the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.

In speaking of the agency of the Holy Spirit upon the mind, it will be proper to observe that,

It is not the office of the spirit to give new revelations, as some enthusiasts have vainly imagined; nor is it the office of the spirit to discover to us mysteries, and recondite meanings

of Scripture, which would have escaped the research of our unassisted faculties.

The Holy Ghost teaches, by enabling the mind to perceive the truth, and excellence, and interesting nature of the doctrines of revelation. The manner in which he acts upon the mind, when he illuminates it, is unknown, as is the manner in which our Maker acts upon us, when he assists us in the natural exercise of our mental powers. The one is a mystery of nature, and the other a mystery of grace. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit."

The necessity of the operations of the Holy Spirit, to lead to a saving knowledge of divine truth, is evident from the testimony of the word of God, and will appear from the following passages: 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11, 14; and 2 Cor. iv. 6. Finally, I would observe, that although the Word, of itself, will never lead depraved man to a spiritual and saving knowledge of divine truth, without the influences of the Spirit; yet the necessity of the Word is by no means excluded; but the Word and Spirit accompany each other. The Scriptures contain the truth to be known; and the Spirit opens the heart, as he did that of Lydia, to attend to, to understand, and to receive these truths in love. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Rom. x. 17.

CHAPTER XLI.

ON THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

WE have considered the prophetic office of our Saviour. The doctrine of his priestly office, next claims our attention. A priest, under the Old Testament, was a person officiating in the name of others; and whose duty it was to sacrifice for the people; to intercede for them; to which may be added a third;

the blessing of the people, as Aaron and his sons were commanded to do.

That Jesus Christ is a priest, is plain, from many passages of Holy Scripture, as Psalm cx. 4; and Heb. v., and other places of this epistle. That he was typified by all such as were really priests, as all the Levitical priests, and especially by Aaron, the high priest, admits of no doubt. Christ was invested with this office, at the time he was constituted the prophet, the priest, and the king of his church. Some say, he was consecrated at his baptism; and this is, so far, true, because he was then solemnly dedicated to the service of his father; but he possessed this office before, and performed its duties, by bearing our griefs, and suffering, and infirmities, while yet, in a private character, he led a life of poverty, privation, labour, and suffering of various kinds, and by the intercessory prayers which he no doubt offered up for the salvation of his people. It appears from Heb. v. 5, vii. 20-22, that he was consecrated by the oath of God. "The law maketh men high priests, which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore." The oath was intended to assure us that God himself invested him with the office; that, as priest, he is the object of his highest approbation; that he never will take the priesthood from him, nor cease to be pleased with the atonement, which he made by the effusion of his blood. "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent."

Christ performed all the duties of a priest. The first duty of his office he performed upon earth, when he offered himself upon the cross, as a sacrifice, and presented the immaculate oblation of himself to God. He hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour. Eph. v. 2.

This would be the place to treat of the death of Christ, as a proper sacrifice for sin. The discussion of this subject will immediately follow.

The second duty of his office is intercession. It was typified by the entrance of the high priest into the sanctuary, where he sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices, and burned incense before

the mercy-seat; it was predicted of him that he should make intercession. "He shall," says the prophet Isaiah, "bear the sins of many, and make intercession for their transgressions"—liii. He interceded already, in the eternal councils of heaven, when he undertook the work of our redemption; Immediately after the fall; under the old dispensation, and in the days of his flesh; John xvii.; and now, being in heaven, he intercedes in behalf of his people; he pleads their cause before his Father's throne, by presenting his righteousness as the only meritorious ground of their acceptance and pardon; he prays for their conversion and sanctification; for their comfort, their strength, preservation and glorification. And as his intercession is always heard, it follows that he is able to save all that come unto God by him.

The third duty of his office, is to bless his people. He blesses them, by justifying them from all their sins; by regenerating and adopting them as children; by imparting to them his Spirit; and, finally, with eternal life and happiness. In a word, he blesses them "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places." Eph. v. 3. Our Lord was "made a priest after the order of Melchisedec." Heb. v. 6. The apostle Paul explains what is meant, when he says of Melchisedec, that he was "without father, without mother, without descent," and that, "having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, he abideth a priest continually." Heb. vii. 3. It is certain, that, being a man, he was born, and died, like other men, and had a genealogy, which was known to his contemporaries; but Paul refers to his history, which, on these subjects, preserves profound silence, and speaks of him only in his public character, and in reference to his office.

The similitude between our Saviour and Melchisedec may be traced in the following particulars. First, Christ had no predecessor in office. He was a priest after the order of Melchisedec, but not a priest of the same order. Christ did not succeed Melchisedec, but he is like him; and that, in this respect, that none was before him. Aaron and his sons were not his predecessors; for he did not belong to the family to which the legal priesthood was confined. He succeeded them,

indeed, as the antitype succeeds the type; but his priesthood was of a different kind. Theirs was a shadow, but his was the truth; theirs consisted in offering animals, but his in offering himself; theirs averted temporal punishment from the Israelites, but his delivered mankind from the guilt of sin, and from eternal perdition.

Secondly, our Saviour has no successor in his office. It is in the perpetuity of his office that the resemblance between him and Melchisedec consists. All the high priests, when Aaron died, and Eleazar his son stood up in his room, were succeeded by their sons and relations, till the second temple was destroyed; but no person will ever succeed our Saviour.

Jesus Christ not only excelled all that were before him, in respect to the order of his priesthood; but he was far superior to them in many other respects. According to the words of an apostle, "he obtained a more excellent ministry." Heb. ix. 28. He was superior in personal dignity; in the manner he was invested with his office: "by the oath of God." The oblation which he presented was far more valuable than the ancient sacrifices. The sacrifices of the Mosaic law were appointed for the Israelites;—Jesus Christ is the High Priest of the human race, and his blood was shed for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. "He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world;" 1 John ii. 2; and even more, the sacrifices of the law could not in themselves appease the justice of God, and obtain his favour to the guilty, Heb. x. 4; but the sacrifice of Christ satisfied every demand of justice. He finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. Dan. ix. 24.

We proceed to consider the sacrifice which our great High Priest offered by his death to make atonement for human guilt and misery. That the death of Christ was the most extraordinary event that ever happened in the world, no man will doubt who pays attention to the remarkable circumstances which accompanied his death and resurrection from the dead.

That Christ by his death made atonement for sin, is a doctrine which was believed by Christians from the earliest ages;

and although they are divided into various denominations, they all—the Eastern and the Western Church, Papists and Protestants, Calvinists and Arminians, agree in this single point, that the death of Christ was propitiatory. They may differ in their views of the nature of the atonement; yet, in regard to the general truth that Christ died to reconcile us with God, they are unanimous.

By the atonement I understand, that satisfaction which Jesus Christ rendered to divine justice by giving himself a ransom for us, and suffering the penalty due to our sins, that thus we might be released from that penalty which God might justly inflict upon us.

The doctrine of the atonement, which has been received universally by the church of Christ, and which is clearly taught in the Scriptures, has been controverted by one class of nominal Christians—by those who deny the divinity of Christ, and maintain his simple humanity.

Unitarians say that Christ died to give us an example of patience, resignation, faith, and hope. Christ, it is true, “suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his footsteps,” 1 Pet. ii. 21; and we are exhorted, that as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, we should likewise arm ourselves with the same mind. 1 Pet. iv. 1.

But was this the only design? We grant that he has left us an example, but we deny that it was the only object which he had in view. If it was the sole purpose of the death of Christ to give us an example, it seems incredible that a just and good Being would have subjected a person so excellent, as Unitarians acknowledge him to have been, pure and spotless in his life, and richly furnished with supernatural gifts, to the most cruel torments, solely to teach us how to behave under our afflictions. Certainly, we might have been taught this lesson at less expense; and it does not appear to be a happy expedient for recommending submission, to place before us a spectacle of a person enduring the severest sufferings, although he had never sinned himself, nor become responsible for the sins of others.

Unitarians tell us further, that Christ died to attest the truth

of his doctrine. It is a fact, that he died to confirm the promises of God, by paying the price of the blessings exhibited in them, and securing the enjoyment of them to believers. 2 Cor. i. 20. But his death had this effect, because it was an atonement for sin, by which the anger of God was appeased, and his favour was restored.

Christ was not a simple martyr for the truth, as Stephen, James, Antipas, and other holy men, who have sealed their testimony to religion with their blood. The death of Christ, considered in itself, would not have proved the truth of his doctrine; it would only have proved that he was fully persuaded of its truth. There have been many martyrs for different religions; if we, therefore, go no farther, we should be compelled to conclude that they are all equally true. It was not necessary that he should die to confirm his doctrine; because he had already confirmed it by the miracles he performed, which plainly show him to be a messenger from God, and consequently that whatever he delivered in the name of God, was to be received without murmuring and disputing. Our Saviour appealed to his miracles as a confirmation of what he said. "Believe me for the very works' sake." John xiv. 11. Hence we conclude, that Christ did not die merely to confirm his doctrine.

Once more: Unitarians say that Christ died to give us the assurance of eternal life, that we might be led to faith and obedience through which we obtain the remission of sin. In a word, they tell us that he died in order to obtain the power of forgiving sin. But he possessed this power before his death. He repeatedly said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." Matt. ix. 6. This does not mean, as some pretend, simply the power of healing diseases.

In the case of the paralytic, there is a clear distinction between the pardon and the cure; the one having taken place before the other, and the cure is expressly declared to be the sign and confirmation of the pardon. We say, then, with the true Catholic church, that Christ died to make atonement for sin. This doctrine we shall now endeavour to prove from the

Scripture; from which only the real design of the death of Christ can be learned.

Previously, I observe that the idea of atonement has prevailed among all nations, and in every age of the world; and, accordingly, sacrifices have been offered with a view of propitiating the Deity.

Hence, it appears that a sense of guilt has been universally felt, accompanied with a fear of punishment, and a persuasion that something ought to be done to appease the Deity.

The idea and practice of sacrifices originated, probably, in the command of God to our first parents after the fall, and was handed down to succeeding ages by tradition. Prior to the advent of Christ, sacrifices were offered not only of thanksgiving, but atonement, by the worshippers of the true God; as, for instance, the sacrifices of Abel, Job, and the Israelites.

The object of the Levitical sacrifices was to make atonement for sin, and appease the wrath of God due to sin. These sacrifices were unquestionably typical of Christ. They were instituted for this purpose, and derived all their efficacy from Christ, and were accepted as atonements for sin, only as the offerer acted faith upon their antitype, Christ Jesus.

The Scriptures affirm, in reference to these sacrifices, that the death of Christ was a propitiatory sacrifice. The language of Scripture is borrowed from the sacrificial rites of the law, and applied to that event in such a manner, as to leave no doubt, that his death was considered, by the sacred writers, as having the same nature and design with the ancient oblations. Christ is called a priest, and the work of a priest is assigned to him. Heb. viii. 3. It is said, that "he gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour." Eph. v. 2. It is affirmed, that "he died for our sins, according to the Scriptures;" 1 Cor. xv. 3; that "he bore our sins in his own body on the tree;" 1 Pet. ii. 24; that "he is the propitiation for our sins;" 1 John ii. 2; that "he was made a sin-offering for us;" 2 Cor. v. 21; that "by his death we are reconciled to God;" Rom. v. 10; that he has "redeemed us to God by his blood." Rev. v. 9. This is the general strain of the New Testament on this subject, in such express language, and in so

many places, that, one should think, it would be sufficient to settle the question, whether the death of Christ was of an expiatory nature.

But, in order more fully to establish the doctrine, let us take a closer view of the legal sacrifices, and observe how exact is the correspondence between them and the death of Christ, in everything essential. The first point of resemblance is found in the substitution of the sacrifice. It was put in the place of the person who offered it, and was called an offering for his sin, or for his soul. It was a vicarious oblation, slain to signify the death which he deserved, and to save him from personally undergoing the penalty. This was signified by the act of laying his hands on the victim, by which the offerer transferred his guilt from himself to the devoted animal, that it might be punished in his stead. Jesus Christ was substituted in the room of sinners; and hence he is called *εγγυος*, the “surety of a better covenant.” Heb. vii. 22. The substitution is evident from those passages in which he is said to have died *for us*, *υπερ ημων*. It is true, the preposition *υπερ* sometimes signifies, merely, on account of, or with a view to the advantage of; but it does not follow, that in reference to the death of Christ, it imports only, that he died for our good, or, to confirm his doctrine, and to set us an example; it signifies, in the room of, and bears this sense, when it occurs in connexion with the verb *αποθνησκω*, in the Scriptures. For instance, “God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, *υπερ ημων απεθανε*. Rom. v. 7. The substitution of Christ may also be inferred from the use of the preposition *αντι*. This preposition sometimes conveys the idea of commutation; as when the law says; eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. It requires that the man who had put out the eye, or tooth of another, should lose one of his own; *οφθαλμος αντι οφθαλμου οδος αντι οδοντος*. It also denotes, substitution, or succession, or coming in the room of another. Archelaus reigned over Judea, in the room (*αντι*) of Herod, his father. Matt. ii. 22. In this sense of substitution, we must understand the following words: “The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister,

and to give his life a ransom for, (*αντι*), in the room of, instead of, many. Matt. xx. 28 ; Mark x. 45 ; 1 Tim. ii. 6.

When we affirm the substitution of Christ, we suppose that our guilt was legally transferred to him, so that he was made answerable for it ; and, in this respect, there is a resemblance between him and the ancient sacrifices. This was represented by a significant rite, on the great day of atonement. On that day, two goats were presented, of which the one was to be slain and offered for a sin-offering ; but the other was to be sent, by the hand of a fit person, into the wilderness, in order to represent the removal of guilt, as the effect of the sacrifice. That the design might be understood, " Aaron," the law says, " shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess, over him, all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away, by the hand of a fit man, into the wilderness." Thus our sins were laid upon Christ, as the sins of the Israelites were laid upon the scape-goat. In allusion to this rite, the prophet says ; " All we, like sheep, have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Is. liii. 6. To the same purpose are the words of the apostles, Paul and Peter. 2 Cor. v. 21 ; 1 Pet. ii. 24. From these passages, it is clear, that there was a transference of the sins of men to our Saviour, as the sins of the Israelite were transferred to the animal which he brought to the altar.

The animal which was substituted in the room of the offending Israelite, and over which he had confessed his sin, was slain, and laid upon the altar. Life was given for life ; the life of the animal, which God was pleased to accept, instead of the life of the man. " The life of the flesh is in the blood ; and I have given it unto you upon the altar, to make atonement for your souls ; for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul." Lev. xvii. 11.

Thus Christ was slain, and laid down his life by the shedding of his blood. He suffered for sin, or as a sin-offering, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God. As the Levitical priest offered the animal in the room of the guilty

Israelite, so Christ "offered himself without spot to God." He appeared in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, Heb. ix. 14, 26; to accomplish at once what was typified by the legal oblations. He was "a Lamb slain;" the "Lamb of God, which took away the sins of the world." John i. 2, 9.

Attempts have been made to neutralize the evidence furnished by these passages in favour of the atonement. When Christ is said to have borne our sins, we are told that this does not mean that he bore the punishment of them, but that he bore them away; and that he bore them away by procuring the offer of pardon upon repentance; or, by presenting motives fit to turn us from our sins, in consequence of which we are forgiven. This explanation is certainly wrong. The object in bearing our sins was undoubtedly to bear them away; but the manner in which they were borne was by enduring the afflictions and sufferings which were due to them; by suffering the penalty of sin, and offering himself a sacrifice on our account. In the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, it is said, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." The two words in the original, "borne," and "carried," both signify, not to bear away, but to bear, or sustain, as a person bears a burden. Dr. Magee has carefully examined the original words translated "borne" and "carried," and by a comparison of other passages in which they occur, ascertained their true import. See Magee on the atonement, in the forty-second note.

It has been objected to the vicarious nature of the death of Christ, that he did not actually bear the punishment to which we are liable, for his sufferings were temporal; whereas, eternal death is the doom of transgressors. In reply to this objection, we remark, that in considering the atonement of Christ, we are not to inquire what was the *quantum* of suffering, in order to ascertain whether it bore an exact proportion to the sufferings which would have fallen to the lot of those whom he died to redeem; but we ought to take into consideration the dignity of his person. We admit that all the acts of his human nature, in which alone he could suffer, were finite, and therefore we cannot say that his sufferings were infinite in degree, and must,

consequently admit that their transcendent worth was owing to the union of his human nature to the divine. He did not, therefore, suffer all the pains and sorrows of sinners, but he suffered what was equivalent. It was the blood of the Son of God that was shed; it was the Lord of glory who was crucified. Hence, although his sufferings were temporary, they satisfied the demands of justice, so that God could now consistently pardon the sins of believers.

CHAPTER XLII.

ON THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

THE atonement which Christ made by his death for the sins of the world, is an essential article of our religion; and it is of the utmost importance that we should be well acquainted with the arguments upon which its existence is founded. In the foregoing Chapter we noticed the exact correspondence between the legal sacrifices and the death of Christ, in every thing essential. The first point of resemblance we find in the substitution of the sacrifice.

Another resemblance is the design of the sacrifices. The design of the sacrifices was to appease the anger of the Deity, and procure his pardon. The design of the death of Christ was to make God propitious to men, to avert his anger, and to procure his favour.

That this was the design of the death of Christ is evident from a number of passages of Holy Scripture.

First, from those passages which speak of Christ as a propitiation for sin, as in John ii. 2, and iv. 10. The word used in both these passages is *ιλασμος*, the proper English of which is a propitiation—a propitiatory sacrifice, or sin-offering. This word is often used by the seventy; and appropriately signifies, in their use of it, a sacrifice of atonement. The same signification it has, and can only have, as used by John.

Secondly, from those passages of Scripture which speak of Christ as a ransom for sin, as in Matt. xx. 23, and other passages. The word translated ransom in this passage is λυτρον, which signifies the price paid for the deliverance of a captive from slavery, or death. Timothy in his first epistle, ii. 6, makes use of the word αντιλυτρον, which denotes the ransom paid for the life of a captive, by giving up the life of another person. The ransom might be a sum of money; but the ransom in Timothy is declared to be the giving up of the Saviour's own life for the life of sinners; or, in other words, dying, that sinners might live. Here, then, the fact that Christ made an atonement is declared in explicit and forcible language.

Of the same nature are all those passages, which declare, that we are redeemed by Christ. For example, Eph. i. 7; Rev. v. 9; Gal. iii. 13. In all these passages, and various others, it is declared, that Christ redeemed us; that is, he brought us out from the bondage and condemnation of sin, by his blood, and by being made a curse for us, in that he died upon the accursed tree. In these passages, the same thing is taught, as in those, where Christ is declared to have given himself a ransom. Thirdly, from those passages in which it is said, that we are reconciled to God, by the death of Christ, as Romans v. 10; v. 11; v. 9, 11; 2 Cor. v. 19.

It is not true, as some affirm, that God is never said to be reconciled to us; but that we are reconciled to Him. It is equally false to affirm, that God was reconciled before he sent his Son into the world, and that Christ did, therefore, not die to reconcile Him. It was, indeed, because he loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son. But this love was only a benevolent purpose, to deliver us, by proper means, and proceeded no farther than to provide those means. He had not actually forgiven us, but was willing to forgive us, if a sufficient atonement were made. He appointed Christ to make reconciliation for sin, by his death, that he might pardon us; and he was willing, as soon as the law and his justice were satisfied, and the grounds of his displeasure against us removed, to receive us into his favour. But, till they were removed, he was not actually reconciled; and hence our pardon and restoration are

not represented as the immediate effects of his original purpose to save us, but are ascribed to the vicarious sufferings of Christ. "The chastisement of our peace," or by which our peace was procured, "was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."

But how, and in what manner was the atonement made? I answer, by his sufferings and death. All the sufferings of Christ were included in the atonement. The death of Christ, together with its preceding and attendant agonies, especially constituted his atonement. The agonies which preceded, and attended the death of Christ, and in which the atonement, made by him for sin, peculiarly consisted, were chiefly mental, or distresses of mind, and not of body.

There is no reason to believe, that the bodily sufferings of Christ were more severe, or even so severe, as those which have been experienced by many others. It is a fact, the death of the cross was undoubtedly a very distressing death; but it was probably less so than that experienced by many of the martyrs. Multitudes of these martyrs have sustained all their distresses without a complaint, and expired without a groan. Numbers have died on the cross itself; and, for aught that appears, with bodily anguish not inferior to that which Christ experienced, and yet, endured their pains with the utmost calmness and resignation. Even the thieves who were crucified together with our Saviour, seem to have died without a complaint. Yet Christ uttered a very bitter complaint, on the cross; and complained, in a similar manner, in the garden of Gethsemane. Whence arose these complaints? Not from want of resignation; for no person was ever so resigned: not from the want of fortitude; for no other person possessed it in an equal degree. The complaints which he uttered do not appear to have any respect to his bodily sufferings, or to the fear of death, but to have originated from a different cause, and that cause purely mental.

How, then, shall we account for these mental sufferings? and for that distress of mind, which he manifested under his sufferings? We cannot account for them, on any other principle, than that he bore the wrath of God, due to sin. It was the prospect of bearing this infinite wrath, and a foretaste of it,

that caused him to be "sorrowful and very heavy," and to say to his disciples: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Matt. xxvi. 37, 38. It was the prospect and foretaste of this wrath, that caused the awful distress which he experienced in the garden of Gethsemane, when he "kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me. And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Luke xxii. 41, 42, 44. And it was the weight of this wrath, increased to its highest degree, when deserted of the Father, while hanging on the cross, that caused that outcry: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. xvii. 46.

Surely, these extreme sufferings of the Saviour, his groans and complaints, are a convincing proof that he bare the infinite wrath of God due to sin, to make atonement for it, and satisfy the Divine justice.

Let it be observed here, that the active obedience of Christ was essentially concerned in his atonement. If Christ had not obeyed the law perfectly, he could not have atoned for the sins of mankind at all. It was because he was a lamb without blemish, and without spot, that he became a proper, acceptable offering. Had he been stained with iniquity, his sufferings would have been of no value, and would have been considered as the mere punishment of his own sins, and not as an expiation for the sins of others.

The active obedience of Christ was indispensable to the existence of the atonement, that he might magnify the law and make it honourable. This was done, in the first instance, by his obedience; and in the second, by his sufferings.

But for whom did Christ offer his sacrifice?

This is a question of importance; the answers to it are different.

Some contend that he died for all men; and others, that he died for those alone who were given to him by the Father. And others, again, maintain that redemption by Christ is expressed in the Scriptures in general terms; that the call of the Gospel extends to all who hear it, but that the application of

the benefits of redemption is limited; and that this limitation is owing to the sovereign will and good pleasure of God, "who hath mercy on whom he will have mercy."

The standards of our faith seem to accord with the latter opinion. In the thirty-seventh question of the Catechism, it is stated that Christ "sustained the wrath of God against *the sins of all mankind*," and in the fifty-fourth question, the church is styled, "a church chosen to everlasting life."

It is objected, that a vicarious atonement for sin is not consistent with the dictates of reason. We reply, that vicarious agency, so far from being an unreasonable thing in itself, constitutes, in one form and another, an important part of the providential system by which the affairs of this world are regulated. Thus children become rich, well educated, religious, and everlastingly happy, by the agency of their parents; while others owe in a great measure to the same agency, the contrary evils of poverty, vice, ignorance, and final ruin. Friends, by their interference, become the means of wealth, reputation, advancement, and everlasting life to their friends, and save them from poverty, disgrace, bondage, and perdition. Enemies often accomplish all the contrary evils for their enemies.

A great part of the business of human life, both public and private, is in the strict sense vicarious. The agency of Moses extended blessings to the Israelites. That of Paul and his companions, has spread holiness through the Christian world. And that of Washington, has beneficially affected every inhabitant of the United States. The whole analogy of human affairs in the present world furnishes us, therefore, with every reason to expect that vicarious agency would be adopted, more or less, in every part of the providential system.

Secondly, it is objected, that the punishment of an innocent person, such as Christ was, is inconsistent with the plain dictates of justice. This objection has been answered in a previous chapter of this work, to which the reader is referred.

Thirdly, it is objected, that the doctrine of the atonement represents God as furious and revengeful, delighting in the miseries of his creatures, and that he would not be appeased; and permit sinners to escape, till his Son offered the dreadful

sacrifice of himself. This is an unfair and malignant representation of a holy and awful truth of revealed religion. The Scriptures do indeed ascribe wrath and revenge to God; but such terms are employed solely to assist us in forming an idea of his displeasure against sin, the strong disapprobation with which he regards it, and his fixed determination to punish the transgressors of his law. He has no pleasure in the misery of his creatures; he is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. As a holy and a just Being, he cannot otherwise but execute the penalty of the law upon those who have violated it, in order to maintain his authority as Ruler of the world. And thus anger is ascribed to him, in condescension to human weakness.

In the fourth place, it is objected, that the doctrine of the atonement supposes God to be liable to change—to be first angry, and then pacified. God is immutable; and it is not true that he was first angry, and then became reconciled. It was not wrath or anger that moved him to give his only begotten Son; but it was love. He loved us before he gave his Son, and is now as much as ever averse to sin. He demanded an atonement, because he does not change; and therefore would not revoke his threatenings, nor lay aside his abhorrence of sin, till his justice was satisfied, and he could honourably pardon transgressors.

In the fifth place, it is objected, that the doctrine supposes a price to have been paid for our redemption, whereas it is represented in Scriptures as free. It is a fact, the Scriptures teach us that we are bought with a price, and that the blood of Christ was shed as a ransom for sin; but they, at the same time, declare that we are saved by grace. Redemption is free; it flows from the free grace of God, who might have left us to perish in our sins. As it was freely purchased, so it is by grace that we become interested in the blessings of redemption, because nothing is given by us in exchange of it.

In the sixth place, it is said, that the doctrine of atonement supposes Christ to have made an atonement to himself; because, if he is God, he is offended as well as his Father.

This objection is founded upon our imperfect knowledge of

the doctrine of the Trinity, and cannot, therefore, be an argument against a truth clearly revealed, notwithstanding it is beyond our comprehension. If there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead, the union and distinctions of whom surpasses our comprehension, is it impossible, and unreasonable, that one of them could not act economically in the character of Supreme Lawgiver and Judge, and another, in a different nature, assumed for the purpose, do what was necessary to display his justice, and open the way for the exercise of his mercy?

Instances might be produced, of human legislators, who, in a private character, gave satisfaction to their own laws. The difficulty of comprehending this arrangement, is no reason why we should call in question the fact, that Christ obeyed and died for our sins, to satisfy the law, and thus to reconcile us with God.

It is further objected, that if Christ expiated the sins of mankind, God is obliged, by justice, to bestow on them salvation.

This objection, we conceive, is founded upon misapprehensions concerning the nature of the atonement. The satisfaction for sin, made by the Redeemer, does not, as the objecter supposes, essentially resemble the satisfaction made for a debtor, by paying the debt which he owed. In such a case, it is true, that, if the creditor accept the payment from a third person, he is bound, in justice, to release the debtor. But this view of the subject is not applicable to the doctrine of the atonement. There is no substantial resemblance between the payment of a debt for an insolvent debtor, and the satisfaction, rendered to distribute justice for a criminal. The debtor owes the money, and this is all he owes. As soon as the money which he owes, is paid, and accepted, justice is completely satisfied, and the creditor can demand nothing more. Therefore, as soon as the debt is paid by a third person, the debtor is discharged by justice merely. But when a criminal has violated laws, which he was in duty bound to obey, he has committed a fault, for which he has merited punishment. In this case, justice demands, not the future obedience of the transgressor; nor an equivalent for the omitted obedience; but merely the punishment of the offender. If the offender is unable to meet the demands of

justice, he remains under the punishment; but if, by the admission of a substitute, as an act of grace, satisfaction is made to the law for the crime of the offender, his pardon may be accompanied with such conditions as the lawgiver shall prescribe. The conditions, as it respects the atonement, are; that as soon as the transgressor submits, and accepts the pardon offered him, he shall live.

The atonement of Christ, therefore, does not make it necessary that God should accept the sinner, on the ground of justice; but only renders his forgiveness not inconsistent with the divine character. Before the atonement, he could not have been forgiven; after the atonement, this impossibility ceases. He can now be forgiven, but his forgiveness is an act of grace only; and to the same grace the penitent must be indebted for all the future blessings connected with forgiveness.

From what has been advanced on this subject, we learn, that all those who trust in the atonement, will certainly inherit the favour of God; but those who reject it, shall perish, without any hope of the divine favour.

CHAPTER XLIII.

ON THE KINGLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

THE kingly office of Christ claims our attention, in this Chapter. We have examined the character of Christ, as the prophet and high priest of mankind: we shall, therefore, proceed to consider his character as a king.

He is represented, both in the Old and New Testament, in many passages, as a king, as in Psalm ii. 6; Jer. xxiii. 56; xxx. 9; xxxiii. 22; and Zach. ix. 9, 10. A regal throne and sceptre is ascribed to him. Ps. xlv. 7; Luke i. 32, 33. The wise men from the East acknowledged him as a king; Matt. ii. 2; and likewise Nathaniel; John i. 49; and he himself declared, before Pilate, that he was a king. John xviii. 33-37. John,

in the Revelation, calls him, "the King of kings, and Lord of lords."

The kingdom of Christ may be considered as twofold ; natural and mediatorial. The natural kingdom of Christ is the universe, and extends to all things in heaven, and on earth. This world, therefore, the planetary system, the stellary systems, the highest heavens above, and hell beneath, are all included in the immense empire of which he is the king.

The natural kingdom belongs to him, as God, in which he would have reigned over all things, equally with the Father and the Holy Ghost, though man had never fallen, and there had been no need of a mediator.

The mediatorial kingdom, is that which belongs to him as God-man mediator. This kingdom is his Church.

The mediatorial kingdom is a gift of the Father. As the Son of God, he does not reign by gift, or delegation, but by original right, and absolute authority over his own works, as Creator and Governor of all things. But, as God-man, his mediatorial kingdom is a gift of the Father, given to him as the recompense of his humiliation and sufferings, as is evident from Phil. xi. 5, 11.

Hence, this mediatorial kingdom is administered by him, not simply as a divine person, but in union with his human nature, which shares in the dignity and glory with which he was invested, after he had completed the work of redemption. Christ founded his kingdom by the ministry of the Apostles. During his personal ministry, he announced that the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

The Apostles, misled by Jewish prejudices, asked, after his resurrection—"Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" It commenced on the day of pentecost, when he poured out the Holy Ghost on his disciples, to qualify them for the work of preaching the Gospel; and erecting the church. Peter, on the day of pentecost, told his hearers that Christ had been exalted by the right hand of God; that God had made him Lord and Christ, and in consequence of that authority with which he was invested, had poured out what they had now seen and heard. The instruments which he selected for

this purpose, were uneducated fishermen, of no worldly power and authority: yet they succeeded; and both Jews and Gentiles were made to bow to the sceptre of the Son of God, and Christianity was in a short time diffused over a considerable part of the earth. The design of employing such instruments, was to illustrate the power of Christ. "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." Ps. cx. 2.

This leads me to observe, that the kingdom of Christ is a *spiritual* kingdom, and was not erected by the force of arms; but by the persuasive influence of the truth, and the invisible operations of grace. "He shall come down as rain on the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth." Ps. lxxii. 6.

The kingdom of God came not with observations, with noise, and external pomp; but its progress was silent and gradual.

The kingdom of Christ is *Catholic*. It comprehends within its boundaries, all who believe and obey the truth, however diversified by external profession. Let us guard against the narrow, unchristian idea, that we alone are the people of God, and that the kingdom of Christ is confined to our little society. All belong to this kingdom, who sincerely acknowledge him as their Lord, and are willing to be guided by his word; mistakes about inferior points, and occasional deviations, through ignorance, from the rule which he has prescribed, will not hinder them from being owned as faithful subjects. And once more I would observe, that the kingdom of Christ is *eternal in its duration*. This is frequently and explicitly declared in the Scriptures.

The Psalmist, prophesying of the Redeemer as a king, said, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Ps. xlv. 6. Isaiah foretold, that "of the increase of his government there shall be no end." Is. ix. 7. Daniel calls his kingdom "an everlasting kingdom," vii. 14. The angel Gabriel, in his address to Mary, informed her that "of his kingdom there shall be no end," Luke i. 33; and in Rev. xi. 15, we read that he "shall reign for ever and ever." From these passages, it is evident that Christ's mediatorial kingdom will be eternal.

There is a passage, however, which appears to militate against the eternal duration of Christ's kingdom, found 1 Cor. xv. 24-28, and which claims our attention. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

By the end, we are to understand the day of Judgment. At this time, it is said that Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father. The kingdom which he will deliver up, is not the kingdom pertaining to him as a Divine person; but his mediatorial kingdom, which he possesses by gift, and which was conferred on him for a particular purpose; namely, that he might accomplish the design of his death upon the cross, in the conversion and final salvation of all that believe on him.

The purpose for which this kingdom was established, was temporary. Therefore, when the purpose for which it was given to him shall be accomplished, there will be no longer need of it. Hence we perceive what may be understood to be the meaning of "delivering up the kingdom to God, even the Father."

The meaning is, I suppose, that Christ will at the end deliver up that power over all things, which was delegated to him as Mediator, for the redemption of his church out of the hands of all its enemies, and bringing them to glory. He will then deliver up this delegated power over universal nature, as having fully accomplished the ends for which he received it, and therefore having, as Mediator, no farther use for it. But still he will continue to be as God-man Mediator, the Head of his church, and reign over it for ever.

By the Son becoming subject to the Father, we understand,

that it shall then appear he acted as mediator by a delegated authority from the Father, and in subserviency to his glory; and having delivered up this delegated authority over universal nature, it will appear that he acted in subjection to the Father, and by authority derived from Him; and then the government of the universe will be conducted exclusively by God, essentially considered; that is, by the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and no longer by the Mediator, as God-man. But still, Christ, as God-man, will continue the head of the Church triumphant, and govern it in a way suited to its glorified state. This view of the text appears to be consistent with the eternal duration of the reign of Christ, as mediator in, and over his Church; and also with his divinity, which is repeatedly, and expressly taught in other parts of Scripture.

The next thing that invites our attention, is the administration of Christ's government, with respect to his kingdom.

Christ executes the office of a king, over his people, by ruling and governing them; by defending them; and conquering all their enemies.

After having subdued his people to himself, through the convincing and converting influences of his Spirit, and translated them from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of grace, he rules and governs them as the subjects of his kingdom. The laws which he gives them, for the government of their hearts and lives, are contained in his Word. These laws require, that they should "do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God;" Micah vi. 8; and that, denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. Tit. ii. 12. The people of God are, in duty, bound to obey his laws, for he came to save them, not in their sins, but "from their sins." "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Tit. xi. 14. "To present them holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable in his sight." Col. i. 22.

Christ rules his people, not only by giving them laws, which are recorded in his Word, but also by writing his laws upon their hearts. "I will put my laws into their mind, and write

them in their hearts." Heb. ix. 10. By this we are to understand that holy disposition in the soul, by which we are influenced to love and obey the law of Christ; to become acquainted with it, and to grieve and be humbled, on account of our imperfect obedience. In order to enforce these laws, he sometimes chastises them, and sends them afflictions, which, when sanctified, have a tendency to exercise their Christian graces, to wean them from the world, and to prepare them for glory. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." Rev. iii. 19. "It is good for me," says David, "that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." Ps. cxix. 67, 71.

Christ, as a king, defends his people against all their enemies. Over these he has power; and he will defend them. Their enemies may, for a time, harass and tempt them, and do them present injury, and, for a season, prevail against them. The world, and the things of this world, may sometimes turn them from the path of duty, and occasion them much distress, before they return, and find their way back. The men of this world may persecute, and even torture and kill them. Inward corruptions often struggle so hard for the dominion, as to make them cry out, with Paul, "O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Satan may be permitted to buffet and tempt them, and death will at last bring down their bodies to the dust, and keep them, for a time, under his power, but, notwithstanding these things, Christ defends his people, and enables them, finally, to obtain the victory over all their enemies. By death, he delivers the souls of his people out of the hands of all their enemies. The men of the world shall no more oppose them; the things of this world shall no more allure or distract them; the flesh shall no more lust against the spirit, and hinder the good they would do; and Satan shall no more tempt or buffet them. The day of judgment will be the day of complete conquest and triumph. Then, on the morning of the resurrection, at the sound of the trumpet, their bodies shall rise, and being again united to their souls, they shall sing the song of victory; "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Thus the last enemy, which had so long retained dominion over the bodies of the saints,

shall be conquered and swallowed up in victory. On this great day, Christ will, as mediator, appear in triumph before an assembled universe, with all his redeemed at his right hand, arrayed in glory, and introduce them into that glorious kingdom, which was prepared for them before the foundation of the world. Now Christ will reign in the kingdom of glory, and all the redeemed, that encircle his throne, will acknowledge him, with profound adoration, as their Lord, their King, and Mediator. Prostrating themselves before him, and casting down their crowns, in humble acknowledgment that they hold them as the gifts of his bounty, and not as the reward of their merit, they cry; "Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power." Rev. iv. 11. The angels join with them in adoration and homage: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Rev. v. 12.

The manner in which Christ administers the kingdom of glory is but partially known to us; this much we know, that every knee shall bow before him, and every tongue confess that he is the Lord, on that great day when he shall appear in his glory to pronounce sentence on an assembled universe; and that his people shall be happy under his care for ever and ever.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE HUMILIATION OF CHRIST.

OUR Saviour, in order to accomplish the great work of our redemption, revealed himself in two states: in a state of humiliation, and in a state of exaltation. The one exhibited him as humbled and abased; the other exhibited him as exalted and glorified. Both were necessary to the execution of his offices.

The state of humiliation is that condition in which the Re-

deemer voluntarily put himself, when the glory of his divine majesty was veiled for a time, and he took upon himself our infirmities, and bore the punishment which we had deserved.

It comprehends four degrees: his incarnation, his sufferings, his death, and his burial.

The humiliation of Christ commenced in his birth. Christ was the Son of God, coequal and coeternal with the Father; "the King of kings, and Lord of lords." "God blessed for evermore." Yet he became incarnate;—he made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." He took on him not the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Heb. xi. 16. And thus he was made a little lower than the angels. Heb. ii. 7. He assumed human nature, not while it was in its primitive innocence; but after it had lost the image of God, and become degraded by sin;—and that in its most helpless state, even a state of infancy.

The circumstances connected with his incarnation greatly increase his humiliation. He was born, not of an earthly princess, or a mother who was opulent, and whose family connections and standing in society were high, which might secure him respect in the world; but he was born of a mother poor and low, in the eyes of the world. He was born, not in a palace, but in an inn; not in any apartment of it, but in the stable of the inn, because there was no room to accommodate them. Here he was born, and was wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger.

The whole course of his life was a state of humiliation. He humbled himself by being subject to the law. He was made under the ceremonial law, and rendered obedience to it; for he was circumcised on the eighth day, and he observed the Jewish feasts. He became subject to the civil law, and gave tribute to Cæsar; and he came under the moral law, and in every respect strictly fulfilled it. What an astonishing act of humiliation! The Sovereign of the universe, and the great Lawgiver, was made subject to the law!

Christ, our Redeemer, in his state of humiliation, was subject

to the infirmities of human nature, to hunger and thirst, to weariness and poverty. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of man had not where to lay his head. Matt. viii. 20.

Christ was tempted by Satan. He was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil, by whom he was assaulted repeatedly, by the most artful and trying temptations. This was, indeed, great humiliation, to suffer himself to be thus tempted by a creature, and at the same time the most malignant spirit in creation.

Further, Christ was humbled by being persecuted and rejected by the world, and by the indignities which they offered him. Immediately after his birth, his life was sought by the jealous and cruel tyrant, Herod; and his parents were under the necessity, to secure his safety, to carry him into Egypt. Notwithstanding all the powerful evidences he gave of his divine commission, the Jews would not believe in him, nor receive him as the promised Messiah.

The world not only rejected him, but they hated him. Their hatred they manifested by their reproaches and persecutions; calling him the carpenter, and the carpenter's son, a Samaritan, a glutton, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, a sabbath-breaker, a blasphemer; and charging him with being possessed with a devil in league with Satan, and casting out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils, and even called him Beelzebub himself.

On a certain occasion, they led him to the brow of a hill, to cast him down headlong; on another, they took up stones to cast at him. Such was the treatment he received from the world.

Again: Christ was humbled in his sufferings. He suffered throughout the whole of his life, especially at the close of it. When he suffered in the garden of Gethsemane, he was in great agony; his soul was sorrowful, even unto death. "My soul," said he, "is sorrowful unto death." Behold him lying prostrate on the ground, praying, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not my will, but thine be done." How great must his agony have been, when we are

told that, "being in agony, he prayed most earnestly, and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Luke xx. 44.

It has been questioned whether this was literally a bloody sweat, or only resembled blood in the largeness of the drops. On the one hand, we may conceive his body to have been agitated to such a degree by the commotion of his mind, that a part of the blood was forced from the veins, and mingled with the other moisture which came from his pores. On the other, we may plead that the expression used by the Evangelist implies no more than resemblance, *ὡσεὶ θρομβοὶ αἱματος*, which is rendered in our English version, "as it were, great drops of blood."

Without deciding upon either opinion, though the latter appears the most probable, we observe that the agony of his mind must have been dreadful, to produce such profuse perspiration in the open air, at a season when the night may be presumed to have been cold, in a person of so much fortitude and self-command; and we certainly cannot account for the intensity of his mental feelings by any natural cause. It is absurd to say that it was caused by the foresight of the treachery of Judas, the desertion of his disciples, the unbelief of the Jews, and the wickedness of the world; and to suppose that it arose from the fear of death, would be to degrade him below his own followers, many of whom encountered death in as terrible a form, not only with composure, but with triumph. No: Nothing but the burden of our guilt could have made him lie prostrate on the ground; nothing but an appalling sense of the wrath of God, could have extorted from him the thrice repeated prayer, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."

But his sorrows were not yet at an end. Now, a band of ruffians, in obedience to the command of their masters, rudely laid hold upon him, and dragged him as a felon to the tribunal of the high-priest, where he was accused of the foulest crimes, and subjected to every indignity. He was reviled and insulted in all the forms which inveterate hostility could invent. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked

off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting." From the tribunal of the Jews, he was led to the judgment seat of Pilate, and, in the presence of Herod and his courtiers, treated as the vilest of mankind, and last was delivered up as a victim to the clamour of the rabble. From the judgment seat of Pilate, he was led forth to Calvary, and nailed to a cross, on which he hung for some time, till he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.

Of the various modes of taking away life by violence, crucifixion was the most painful. The extended hands and feet were fastened to the wood by nails violently driven through them, and the whole weight of the body hung upon these nails, and greatly added to the pain of the wounds made by them. It was a lingering death, which greatly added to its torment; and it was a most shameful death. It was accounted cursed among the Jews. Deut. xxi. 23. And it was the most ignominious death; and was accounted so infamous, that it could not be inflicted on a Roman citizen; only the offscouring of mankind were nailed to the cross.

The very manner, therefore, of our Saviour's death, was a part of his humiliation. And a still more humbling circumstance was, that he was crucified between two thieves, as though he had been the chief malefactor. Another very humbling circumstance, in the death of Christ, was the sufferings he endured from the wrath of God. It was this that caused the dreadful sufferings he endured in Gethsemane; and it was the weight of this wrath, which caused him, while hanging upon the cross, to cry out; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

The last degree of Christ's humiliation, was his burial. After his death, his body was taken, by permission, by Joseph, and laid in his own sepulchre, which he had hewn out of a rock, and continued there, under the power of death, until his resurrection, on the third day.

In the Apostles' Creed, a composition bearing the name of the apostles, but long posterior to their age, it is said, that "Christ descended into hell." This must not be understood as if Christ descended into the place of the damned, to triumph there over the powers of hell, or that he entered into a porch

of hell, where the believing fathers of the Old Testament were kept, to deliver them out of it. The following words are found in the sixteenth Psalm, and are applied to our Saviour by Peter, in the second chapter of the Acts: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." שְׂאוֹל, *scheol*, is the word used in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, and Ἀδης, *hades*, the Greek of the New Testament. They signify, both hell, and the grave, and are, therefore, translated sometimes by hell, and sometimes by the grave. Hell is now used for the place of the damned; but both the Hebrew and Greek words, originally, signified the invisible state of the dead. The descent of Jesus into hell, is, therefore, the same as his burial. The sense of the passage, in the Psalms, is this: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in the invisible state; nor suffer thy Holy One to see corruption!"

The Heidelberg Catechism understands, by his descent into hell, "His unspeakable anguish, pains and terrors, and hellish agonies, in which he was plunged during all his sufferings, but especially on the cross."

The humiliation of Christ manifests the greatness of his love, and puts us under infinite obligations to love him supremely. Let us learn humility from his example. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matt. xi. 29.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST.

THE humiliation of Christ, was the subject of the preceding Chapter. Although during his humiliation a veil was drawn over his glory, yet some rays occasionally broke through, which manifested his essential glory and official dignity. The sublime doctrine he taught; the miracles he performed; the voices and signs from heaven, declaring him to be the Son of God, and Redeemer of the world; and the extraordinary events, which happened at his death, all these things prove that he was the

Christ. His life, from the manger to the tomb, was a course of profound humiliation. It was not till his resurrection, that the glory which was to follow his sufferings, commenced. The resurrection of Christ is an essential article of our holy religion. It is the foundation upon which it rests; the foundation of our hope of future bliss and glory. "If Christ be not risen, then is our faith in vain."

No matter of fact was ever better attested, with more infallible proofs, than the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Before I proceed to consider the evidences, by which this doctrine is proved, I shall previously observe, that he was raised on the third day after his death.

This was the time fixed by himself, and it was so well known, that his enemies were apprised of it. "Sir," the Jews said to Pilate, "we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again." Matt. xxvii. 63. He died on the afternoon of Friday, and was buried before sunset, when the day ended, according to the Jewish reckoning. This was the first day. At sunset the Jewish Sabbath commenced, during the whole of which, he rested in the grave. This is the second day. When the sun set again, the third day commenced. On the ensuing morning, most probably between the dawn and sunrise, the soul of our Redeemer was united to his body, and he went forth from the tomb, as a mighty conqueror of the king of terrors.

The Jews always reckoned the beginning of the day from the evening before it—"the evening and the morning were the first day." Thus was Christ, according to the Jewish computation of time, three days and three nights in the grave; and thus was his own prophecy fulfilled: "as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so should the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Matt. xii. 40.

Again, I observe, he was raised by the power of his Father;—indeed, he raised himself by his own power. "I have power," said he, "to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again." John x. 18. Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. John ii. 19. But it is the

Father who is usually represented as the agent in this event, according to the plan of redemption. Jesus died in obedience to the will of his Father, and by his sufferings and death appeased his justice; it was, therefore, fit and necessary that he should openly receive a discharge, as having paid the debt which we owed to God.

Further, I observe, that Christ was raised with the same body which was crucified, and laid in the grave. Luke xxiv. 39. But with an incorruptible, and immortal, and glorious body. Phil. iii. 21.

This glory the Saviour in a great measure concealed from his disciples, while he continued on earth. But after his ascension, when he appeared to John, in the island of Patmos, Rev. i. 14-16, his head and his hairs were white, like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass, and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

We proceed to prove the doctrine.

First, the resurrection of Christ was not impossible. It is true, we have never seen any person raised from the dead; but, does it follow that nothing is possible which we have not witnessed? A man who believes the existence and almighty power of God, will not deny that he can raise the dead; there being no greater difficulty in the restoration of a body to life, than there was in originally forming it, and endowing it with a sentient and intelligent soul.

Secondly, the event is probable. Jesus having died on the cross, his body was taken down, was buried; but when the sepulchre was examined on the third day, it was empty;—hence, it is probable, but, in the third place, it is undeniable, and beyond all doubt, that Christ rose from the dead.

The reality of Christ's resurrection is evident from the testimony of his disciples, or from a number of creditable witnesses, who had every opportunity of knowing the certainty of the fact. The evangelists inform us that he appeared to several of his disciples individually; to the apostles collectively, when Thomas was absent; again, to a number of the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; again, to more than five hundred brethren at

once ; and, lastly, that he was seen by the apostles and disciples, when he led them from Jerusalem to Bethany, where, in the presence of them all, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.

These witnesses of the resurrection could not be deceived. They were eye and ear witnesses of what they testify. They had been long and intimately acquainted with Christ, and perfectly knew his person. He appeared to them at several different times, for the space of forty days, conversed and ate with them ; offered himself to be handled by them, to convince them that he was not a spirit or apparition ; showed them the marks of his wounds in his side, and the prints of the nails in his hands, and in his feet ; and, finally, after giving them his parting instructions and benediction, ascended up towards heaven, until a cloud received him out of their sight. How, then, could they be deceived ?

They would not be deceived, because they were not credulous. Mary Magdalene first saw him, and reported it to his disciples ; but "they believed not." Mark xvi. 11. Several women were together at the sepulchre early in the morning, and were told by two heavenly messengers that the Lord was risen ; when they communicated this news to the apostles, "their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." Luke xxiv. 10, 11.

He again appeared unto two, as they were going from Jerusalem to Emaus, and they went and told it unto the residue, "and they believed it not." Mark xvi. 12, 13. Afterwards, he appeared unto the apostles, when Thomas was absent. They were terrified, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. Luke xxiv. 37. And after, on another occasion, he had offered them his hands, and his feet, to be handled by them, to convince them that he was not a spirit ; "they yet believed not, for joy, and wondered." After they were convinced, and informed Thomas that they had seen Jesus, Thomas would not believe. "Except I shall see in his hands," said Thomas, "and put my finger in the print of his nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." All these considerations show, that they were not credulous, and that they would not be deceived.

These witnesses of the resurrection of Christ, could not deceive, or impose upon mankind. They published the resurrection of Christ immediately, which was the most proper time to have the subject examined, and when, if it had not been true, it might have easily been disproved, and contradicted. They gave testimony to the resurrection of our Lord immediately; and they appealed to many eye-witnesses, of his being alive again, after he was crucified, when they preached this doctrine to the world. They could not, nor would they deceive; for they had no interest, no advantage in doing so. They went about and preached the resurrection of Christ, at the hazard of their lives, and of all that was dear to them. They renounced all their vain hopes of worldly greatness, and cheerfully embraced affliction, suffering, and death. Many of them actually sealed their testimony with their blood, and not one of them could, in any way, be brought to recant it. Now, can it be supposed, that such a number of men, could be so far lost to all reason, and turn such mortal enemies to themselves, as thus voluntarily to expose themselves to all manner of injuries from an enraged world, and to martyrdom and cruel death, for the maintaining of a doctrine which they knew to be false, or even which they did not certainly know to be true?

In the next place, the resurrection of Christ is evident from the testimony of his enemies. His enemies, the Jews, in order to evade the argument for the disappearance of the body, industriously circulated a report that it was stolen by the disciples, while the soldiers, who guarded the tomb, were asleep. Nothing is more improbable, than that a whole guard of soldiers should be asleep at their post, and especially of Roman soldiers, who were under the strictest discipline, and knew that a severe punishment awaited them, if they should neglect their duty, and especially so, as they had received strict orders to be vigilant. It is incredible that they should have all fallen asleep, and slept so soundly, as not to be awakened by the rolling of the stone which closed the door of the sepulchre, and to give the disciples an opportunity to accomplish their design in the most deliberate manner; for the body was not carried away in haste; but was stripped of the grave-clothes, which were not scattered up and

down, but regularly deposited in the tomb. And if the soldiers were asleep, how could they know that the disciples had stolen the body? For aught that they could tell, the theft had been committed by some other persons. How could they know that it had been stolen at all? All that they could say, if they were really asleep, was, that when they awoke, the stone was rolled away, and the body was gone. Whether it had been restored to life, and had removed itself, or, had been removed by the agency of others, they were manifestly unqualified to tell.

That the disciples should have stolen the body away, as was reported, is not even probable. The disciples were all disheartened, and fled, when their master was apprehended; and endeavoured to conceal themselves, lest they should share the same fate with him: that they should form the design of stealing the body away from an armed guard, and attempt to execute it, and that too in a moonshiny night, is altogether improbable. They could not know, if they made the attempt, they would find the guard asleep. But, suppose they had made the attempt, and found the guard asleep, is it in the least probable that a sufficient number of them, to effect their purpose, could have come into the midst of the guard — broken the seal — rolled away the great stone — entered the sepulchre, and taken out and borne the body of Jesus away, without awakening one of the guards? All this could not be done without considerable noise. Is it not then astonishing that not one of the guards should awake?

We see, then, that the reality of Christ's resurrection is evident from the testimony of his enemies.

To these arguments for the resurrection of Christ, we may add, the outpouring of the spirit on the day of Pentecost; the conversion of Paul; the miracles the apostles performed in the name of Christ; and the extraordinary success of the preaching of the Gospel in the conversion of mankind, of both Jews and Gentiles.

It has been said, that if Christ really rose from the dead, why did he not show himself to the priests and rulers of the Jews, that they might be convinced, and become witnesses of the fact? This objection is not worthy of much attention.

For had Jesus appeared to the priests and rulers, they would either have acknowledged him to be the Messiah, or they would have persisted in rejecting him. If they had not believed in him, the evidence, instead of being strengthened, would have been weakened; for it would then have been said, that although a few ignorant persons had been deceived by the artifice of the disciples, others, who were better qualified, had examined the matter carefully, and had found it out to be an imposture. If, on the other hand, they had believed in Christ, it does not follow that the evidence would have acquired additional strength. Instead of a few witnesses, we should then have had many; the whole Jewish nation, or the greater part of it, instead of five hundred disciples. But the value of the testimony is to be estimated by the character, not by the number of the witnesses.

At present, we have a sufficient number of competent witnesses, who were in every respect qualified to bear testimony to the fact; and if we are not satisfied with their testimony, we would not be more so, had Christ appeared to the whole Jewish nation. For then it would have been said, that it was a contrivance of the Jews, who were ready to give credit to any story which seemed to realize their hopes of the Messiah.

It has further been objected, by infidels, that there are some discrepancies in the narratives of the Evangelists, as affecting their credibility. Learned men have taken great pains to remove the apparent contradictions, and to show how they may be reconciled. See West's *Observations on the History and Evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, and the seventh Preliminary Observation, and the one hundred and fiftieth section of Macknight's *Harmony of the Four Gospels*.

But let us allow, for a moment, that they are at variance in some particulars, this would not affect or invalidate their testimony in the opinion of any reasonable mind, as they are agreed in the main fact, and differ only in some matters which are not of much importance. In other cases, we deem the evidence sufficient, when we find substantial truth with circumstantial variety; that is, when a number of witnesses positively attest the same fact, but disagree in some inferior points which do not materially affect the truth of the general statement. Upon

this principle, I doubt not that the testimony of the Evangelists would be received as consistent and credible by any civil court, as not one of them has denied the fact of the resurrection, but unanimously affirm it. The differences among them are only apparent, which do not affect the general history; as the precise time in the morning when the event took place, and the number of individuals who were present at a particular moment. Read the history of Cyrus, by Herodotus and Xenophon, and you will find not only a diversity, but a contradiction in several important points. Yet no one ever doubted that there was such a man as Cyrus, who conquered Babylon, and performed the other exploits which antiquity has ascribed to him.

Once more: It is objected, that John relates that on two occasions, when the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood in the midst of his disciples. John xx. 19-26.

Now, as one solid substance cannot pass through another solid substance without dividing it, either what John relates did not happen, and consequently the narrative is false, or Christ did not appear in a real body, and it was only a phantom which the disciples saw.

The simple answer to this objection is this, that although the Evangelist plainly signifies that he entered in a miraculous manner, he does not determine the nature of the miracle. The doors were no doubt shut and locked, for fear of the Jews; but Jesus might have opened them without being perceived. The objection is hardly worthy of notice.

The resurrection of Christ is full of consolation, and calls forth our gratitude and praise. By his resurrection he fulfilled all the prophecies and the types of the Old Testament, which related to this great event; he vindicated his character from the aspersions of his enemies; proved that he had accomplished the work of redemption; and his resurrection is a most sure and certain pledge of the resurrection of all his people, and of their final triumph over death and the grave.

He rose as their representative; and as the head lives, so shall the members of his body also live; "I live, and ye shall live also." John.

CHAPTER XLVI.

ON THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST.

AFTER our Lord had finished the work of our redemption, it was not necessary that he should remain any longer upon earth. It was rather necessary that he should leave it, in order to communicate the blessings of salvation to his followers; and, in particular, to make way for the coming of the Holy Spirit, which he had promised to send after his departure; John xvi. 5-7.

Christ, after his resurrection from the dead, ascended into heaven. The place from which he ascended was the Mount of Olives. Gethsemane was on the Mount of Olives. This was the place where, a short time before, he had been in agony; where he was apprehended, and whence he was led away to Jerusalem to be crucified. By the Mount of Olives lay the village of Bethany; and it was in the vicinity of this village that he parted from his disciples.

The place to which he ascended was heaven;—the place in which the glory of God, which is partially seen in his works, is fully revealed; angels and the departed spirits of the just at present reside; and the redeemed, after the resurrection, will have their everlasting habitation.

The time when he ascended was forty days after his resurrection. He did not ascend sooner, that he might instruct his disciples in those things pertaining to his kingdom, and give them the most certain proof that he was really risen. He would not remain with them longer, that he might not confirm them in their opinion, that he intended to erect a temporal kingdom upon earth.

The witnesses of his ascension were his disciples, whom he had assembled for this purpose. Whether there were any others present, we cannot say with certainty. But, supposing, what, however, is not very probable, that none were present but the twelve apostles, the number was more than sufficient to attest the fact. They were witnesses qualified in every

respect; and as their testimony would readily be received by the other disciples, who had full confidence in their veracity, so it is entitled to credit among all other men, confirmed as it is by miracles, which they performed by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, whom Christ promised to give them after his ascension, and whom he did actually send on the day of pentecost.

Our Lord was attended at his ascension by the glorious inhabitants of heaven. Only two of them were seen; but we have reason to believe that thousands were present, although invisible to human eyes. "The chariots of God," says the Psalmist, "are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Ps. lxxviii. 17, 18.

Our Lord ascended in human nature. As God, he could neither descend or ascend, because, his divine essence filling heaven and earth, cannot change its place, and cannot be exalted to that accession of glory which the ascension implies. As Christ ascended in his human nature, it follows that he is no more present with us, according to his body. The omnipresence of Christ's body is opposed to the nature of a body, which cannot be present in more than one place at the same time; moreover, omnipresence is an incommunicable attribute of God.

Those who maintain the omnipresence of Christ's body, say, Is not Christ with us, even to the end of the world, as he hath promised? Most certainly. But it does not follow, agreeably to this promise, that he is bodily present. Christ is God and man in one person, therefore, as the catechism teacheth, "with respect to his human nature, he is no more on earth; but with respect to his Godhead, majesty, grace and spirit, he is at no time absent from us." Question 47.

Again, it is objected, if the human nature is not wherever the Godhead is, that the two natures will be separated, one from the other. In reply, we say, that the two natures in Christ are not mixed, or united in such a manner, as to be equal, one to the other; but the two natures are so united: The divine

nature, which is infinite, assumed the human nature, which is finite, into a personal union with itself; hence, it follows that, wherever the human nature is, there the Godhead must be also, and that it remains personally united to the human nature; but it does not follow that the human nature is wherever the Godhead is. The sun is united to its rays; but the sun is not wherever its beams are. "Since the Godhead," says the catechism, Question 48, "is incomprehensible and omnipresent, it must necessarily follow that the same is not limited with the human nature he assumed, and yet, remains personally united to it."

The manner in which Christ ascended, was visibly, in the sight of his disciples. While they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. It appears that he was not taken away by a sudden rapture, but slowly rose from the earth, and that the disciples had leisure to follow him with their eyes, when a cloud received him out of their sight, or, intervened between him and the earth.

He ascended, blessing his disciples. Luke xxiv. 50. This was the last thing he did on earth. He ended his personal ministry on earth by blessing his people; and, having ascended on high, we may be encouraged to believe that he is still deeply interested in the welfare of his disciples, and will bless them with all needful spiritual blessings.

The reason why he ascended, was to fulfil the prophecies and types. His ascension was foretold by the Psalmist, and others of the prophets, and it was prefigured by the entrance of the high priest, once a year, on the great day of atonement, within the vail of the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle and temple, carrying with him, and presenting before the Lord, the blood of the sacrifice, which he had offered without. Therefore our great high-priest, after having sacrificed himself on the cross, entered into the most holy place of the heavenly tabernacle, there to present before the Father, in our behalf, the sacrifice which he had offered for us in this world. Christ ascended, that he might enter upon his glory. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into glory?" Luke xxiv. 26. Christ ascended, that he might send down the

gifts of the Holy Ghost upon his disciples, and thus qualify them, by his miraculous and gracious influences, for the work to which they were called. John xvi. 7.

Another reason why Christ ascended, was that he might make intercession for his people; Heb. ix. 24; "and prepare a place for them in his Father's house;" John xiv. 2; that when he comes again he may take them to himself, to be with him for ever.

Let us now proceed to consider what followed the ascension of Christ: "So then," says the Evangelist Mark, "after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God."

When it is said, in this, and other passages of Scripture, that Christ sits on the right hand of God, it is evident that this language is figurative; for God, being a Spirit, without body or bodily parts, and being everywhere, no particular place can literally be said to be at his right hand. As it was customary for earthly kings to place those on their right hands whom they advanced to honour, power, and favour, so Christ is said to sit at the right hand of God, to denote the great dignity, power, and favour, to which, as God-man mediator, he is advanced by the Father.

His sitting at the right hand of God, denotes honour and dignity. It was shown, in the former part of this chapter, that the ascension related solely to his human nature; because his divine was incapable of change of place, being always in heaven as well as upon earth. So, I observe, that it was equally incapable of any accession of glory, because it was already infinitely glorious in the possession of all possible perfection. But its glory was veiled during his humiliation, and was only seen occasionally in the miracles he performed, and the sublime doctrines he taught; but when he ascended to sit down at the right hand of God, he appeared in all the dignity of his character, and showed to all the blessed inhabitants of heaven, that the Son of man is also the Son of God, and the equal of the Father. In reference to this original dignity, the Saviour prayed, "And now, O Father, glorify me with thine

own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

Again: The right hand is an emblem of power. The Psalmist refers to the power of the Messiah, in his state of exaltation, in these words: "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Ps. cx. 1. Our Saviour told his disciples, after his resurrection, that "all power is given to him in heaven and in earth," Matt. xxviii. 18; and Paul, in writing to the Philippians, (ii. 9-11,) expresses himself in the following words: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of the Father."

The session of Christ denotes the great favour with the Father, to which, as Mediator, he is advanced. For, most assuredly, he on whom the Father hath bestowed so great honour and power, must be in great and chief favour; and hence it is the will of the Father, "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." "He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." John v. 23.

The subject of Christ's exaltation teaches us the duty of seeking those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and to set our affections on things above, and not on things below.

It is a source of consolation to real Christians, to know that Christ has triumphed over all his enemies; that he ever liveth to make intercession for them; that all power is given to him, as the Head of the church; and that he has gone to prepare a place for them, and finally to take them to himself, to reign with him in glory for ever.

CHAPTER XLVII.

VOCATION.

OUR salvation was purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ, when he, in the character of high-priest, paid the price of his precious blood. But it is not enough that salvation has been purchased, it must also be applied; we must become interested in the benefits of redemption, by effectual calling, justification, sanctification, and preservation unto eternal life.

The first benefit of redemption, in order, is vocation.

By vocation, I understand an invitation and command to turn to God, to believe and obey the Gospel. The term call, or calling, implies the following particulars:

It implies, that the persons called are at a distance; or that they are asleep; or that they are inattentive, and so much engaged in other things, that they have no leisure to attend; or it implies unwillingness on the part of those who are called. All these particulars are applicable to sinners in their unrenewed state.

The call of God is distinguished into the external and internal.

God calls externally by the voice of nature and Providence; by the dictates of conscience; by his goodness, and by his judgments and afflictions.

But the ordinary means by which he calls externally, is his word. This word contains two parts, the law and the Gospel.

The law makes known to the sinner his guilt, his misery, and his inability; it convinces him of the necessity of a mediator, to satisfy the justice of God, on account of his violation of the law; it alarms him in his carnal security, and points out to him his danger.

The Gospel directs him to the means by which he can be saved from his sins, and come to God; it points to a crucified Saviour, and to that complete redemption he purchased by his sacrifice on the cross; it assures him that he is willing and able to save all that come unto God by him. The Gospel

invites him to come to the Saviour without delay, and promises that all that come to him shall not be cast out. "Look unto me," the Gospel calls, "all ye ends of the earth, and be saved." Jer. xlv. 22. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." Matt. xi. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, let him come to the water." Jer. lxxv. 1.

God calls internally by his Spirit, by which the external is made effectual. The external call is, of itself, insufficient to bring sinners to embrace Christ and salvation, though it leaves them altogether inexcusable, and justly condemned for their disobedience. The reason why this external call proves insufficient to bring men to accept of the terms of salvation, is not because it is deficient, or does not contain all that is necessary to make men wise unto salvation; nor is it a want of natural powers in the sinner to believe and obey the gospel; but the true cause is an aversion of heart to the salvation of Christ, in consequence of which the mind is blinded, so that sinners willingly and continually go on to reject the call of God, made in his word, and the preaching of the gospel.

The Scriptural representation of the natural state of man, clearly teaches the insufficiency of the external call, by the word alone, to bring men to salvation; and the necessity of the internal call of the Holy Spirit.

The Scriptures represent mankind by nature totally depraved, and in darkness, Eph. iv. 18, v. 8; 1 Pet. xi. 9; 1 Cor. xi. 14; as enemies of God, and carnal minded, Col. i. 21; Rom. viii. 7; Eph. xi. 1, 5; as dead, spiritually dead, and insufficient even to think anything as of ourselves, 2 Cor. iii. 5.

The Scriptures ascribe the work of grace in the heart to God. For instance, 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7; 1 Cor. iv. 7; 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11; Eph. xi. 1, 3, 10; Tit. iii. 5.

From these, and many other passages of Holy Writ, it is evident that effectual calling is not from the word alone, but also from the divine influence of the Spirit accompanying the word. Thus we read in the case of Lydia, the Spirit accompanied the external call: while she attended to the preaching of the apostle Paul, "the Lord," it is said, "opened the heart of Lydia." Let it be observed, however, that although the

word, and the preaching of the word, of itself, will not effectually call sinners to embrace the Saviour, yet the Spirit operates by and with the word.

The internal call is irresistible. Not that man is compelled to obey the internal call, against his will; or that the mind is wrought upon by way of physical influence. Men are not forced into the service of God by offering violence to their understandings and wills; but the Spirit, by means of the word, convinces the understanding, and the understanding being enlightened, the will is influenced by motives and arguments, so as to dispose it to act agreeably to such conviction, and to comply with the terms of the gospel.

The manner in which the Holy Spirit operates upon the soul in effectual calling, is a mystery we cannot fully explain. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," says the Saviour, "and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." John iii. 8.

The first act of the Spirit in effectual calling is to convince the sinner of his sins and misery, and of the danger to which he is exposed, on account of sin; namely, the wrath of God, and eternal death. As soon as the sinner is thus convinced of his lost and undone state, he is anxious to be delivered, and he inquires, what must I do to be saved?

The next act of the Spirit is then to enlighten the mind in the knowledge of Christ, as a Saviour, as willing and all-sufficient to save him; and to renew the will, imparting to the soul a new and holy disposition, and to sanctify the affections, by placing them on heavenly things. Now the sinner is enabled to act faith on Christ, to accept of him in all his offices, and cordially to embrace him for the purposes of salvation, as he is offered in the Gospel.

As to the time, and manner, and means, of effectual calling, I would observe, that some are called at the third hour, others at the sixth, and others not till the eleventh. Some, like good Obadiah, have feared the Lord from their youth; or, like young Timothy, have been acquainted with the Holy Scriptures from their childhood; when others are born out of due season. As

to the manner of God's calling sinners:—some are drawn with the cords of love, and, like Samuel, can hardly distinguish the voice, or declare at what time, or manner, the happy change began; others have been called in a more remarkable manner, and, like the gaoler, have been struck to the ground, and made to cry out, trembling, “what shall I do to be saved?”

The ordinary means, as we have been informed, is the Word. Some have been awakened by hearing a sermon; some, by reading the Holy Scriptures, or books of devotion; some, by religious conversation; and some, again, by a remarkable providence. From what has been advanced on this subject, we learn, that the Gospel call produces different effects. To some, it is the savour of death unto death: they are opposed to the truth, and hate the truth, to their own destruction. Others, although they are not opposed to the truth; yet they are indifferent, and do not listen with attention to the calls of mercy. Many are brought to an historical knowledge of the Gospel, but remain unconcerned, and careless: with many, conscience is awakened, and they become alarmed; but soon lose their impressions, as was the case with Felix. Acts xxiv. 25; xxvi. 28. But, thanks be to God! there is a goodly number, to whom it proves the savour of life unto life; who are made willing, in a day of God's power, and who are, finally, effectually called. To conclude, it is the duty of all that are called, to hear and obey without delay; to attend to the means of grace, and, when the Spirit strives with them, not to resist him in his common operations, which may finally terminate effectually, in their conversion and eternal salvation.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

REGENERATION.

REGENERATION is the restoration of the image of God to the soul, or, regeneration is that work of God in the soul, whereby spiritual life, which is the image of God, is restored, and all the powers and faculties of the soul are renewed and sanctified.

It is represented, in Scripture, under a variety of metaphors and expressions; such as, being born again; or, Christ being formed in the heart; or, a partaking of the divine nature; or, it is called a resurrection; a new creature; a new heart.

Regeneration is not baptism. Baptism is, indeed, a lively representation, or a sign and seal of it; but it is not, as some suppose, the grace itself, else all baptized persons might lay claim to this privilege of the children of God, though their conversation be in direct opposition to the precepts and spirit of the Gospel.

Neither does it consist in a mere reformation of conduct, from a vicious to a moral course of life. Of such a character we may, indeed, say, as far as we can judge, that he is born again; and if the change be real, it will manifest itself in his life and conduct; but this is only the fruit of, and not regeneration itself. And again, it is not a physical change wrought in the body or soul, for the body is not changed, neither are there any new powers or faculties imparted to the soul, in a physical sense. It is an inward, supernatural change in the soul, mysterious in its operations, according to the declaration of our Lord to Nicodemus, recorded in the third Chapter of John. The author, or the efficient cause of regeneration, is not man, but God alone. All the divine persons are concerned in it. Of God the Father, Peter says, that he hath begotten us; 1 Peter i. 3; of God the Son, it is said, that he is, "the resurrection and the life;" the author of spiritual resurrection to a spiritual life. Yea, it is by his powerful voice in the Gospel, that the dead hear and live. God the Holy Ghost, is also considered, in a special manner, as the author of this work, for believers are born of water, and of the Spirit, who, by his quickening grace, gives life, and delivers from the law of sin and death.

Regeneration is an act of Almighty power, particularly of the third person in the Holy Trinity. The external means employed are, the Word, and preaching of the Gospel. Hence, regenerate persons are said to be "born again by the Word of God;" 1 Pet. i. 23; and again, "of his own will begat he us, with the Word of truth." James i. 18. But the true cause of

the efficacy of the external means is, the invisible power of God, silently influencing the soul. Though we cannot explain in what manner God acts upon his creatures; yet this can be no objection to the fact. It is not contrary to the analogy of nature, that the grace of God, denoting the exertion of his power upon the soul, should be employed in regeneration. Is it owing to his constant influence, that we live, and think, and will, and move our limbs, and perform all our bodily and mental functions? If so, what difference is there between this case, and the conversion of sinners, that we should not assent to the one, what we admit in the other?

The operation of the power of God in regeneration, may be considered as of the same kind with its operation in Providence, although it is exerted for a different purpose. As the influence of Providence in upholding, exciting, and directing us, is not destructive of our rational nature, what ground have we to say that the influence of grace, in giving us new moral habits and inclinations, is subversive of it?

The same power which creates and upholds all things—the same power which assists us in the exercise of our natural faculties, enables us to exercise them in a spiritual manner. And if we consider the nature of the change which is effected by the grace of God in regeneration, we cannot otherwise but infer that it is produced by the power of God. It is a change of the whole man; of his views and principles, and inclinations and pursuits. This is a change which no means merely human have ever been able to accomplish.

The power of God, exerted in regeneration, is invincible. We do not deny that the grace of God may be resisted, not only by the finally impenitent, but by those who ultimately yield to it; but, in the end, man must submit to the power of Divine grace; because his power is sufficient to subdue the most stubborn will, to remove all opposition, and to influence the hearts of men, that they at last yield voluntary submission, without compulsion or force exerted upon their minds.

In regeneration, in the moment of this act, the soul is passive; but in all the exercises which flow from this principle, and are manifested in the new life, the soul is active. Regene-

ration is represented as a creation, and a resurrection from the dead. In both these cases, in a literal sense, the subject is passive. The thing created, must be passive in the act of creation, and cannot co-operate with the Creator; and in the infusion of life into a dead body, the body itself must be passive, and cannot co-operate with the power imparting life, in the production and infusion of that life.

Hence, since regeneration is frequently represented in Scripture as a creation and a resurrection, we conclude that the soul must be passive in the spiritual creation and resurrection. In John i. 12, 13, regeneration is not only ascribed to God, but he also expressly denies the co-operation of the creature. "As many as received him," &c.

Let us now attend to the evidences of regeneration. Regeneration, I have stated, is the restoration of the image of God in the soul. The instrument is the word of God, and the agent is his Spirit.

The evidences of this change are: a heartfelt conviction of our moral depravity, and the danger to which we are exposed, on account of our departure from God; a godly sorrow for sin, proceeding from a consciousness that we have offended the best of Beings; and which strips the sinner of all his righteousness, and brings him to a throne of grace, confessing his transgressions and imploring the mercy of an offended God in the pardon of his sins; and finally, a renunciation of all sins, in heart and in deed, accompanied with a life of holiness in all sobriety, righteousness, and godliness.

As the sinner, previous to his regeneration, is dead in trespasses and sin, so now, having experienced this renovating change, he has passed from death unto life; and "Christ, the hope of glory, is formed in him." The understanding is illuminated, the will and the affections are renewed and sanctified, and the members of the body become the instruments of righteousness.

That regeneration is absolutely necessary to salvation, is a truth taught in various parts of Scripture, and in express language by our Lord, in his interview with Nicodemus.

“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John iii.

It is necessary, because of the holiness of God. God is holy — heaven and all its exercises and enjoyments must be holy ; but man is destitute of holiness, Gen. vi. 5 ; Ps. lxxxi. 5 ; Is. lxiv. 6 ; Rom. vii. 18 ; Eph. xi. 1 ; 1 Cor. ii. 14 ; Rom. viii. 7, and therefore unfit for holy enjoyments, and for the happiness of heaven. God, as a holy being, who is of purer eyes than to behold sin and iniquity, cannot, in the nature of things, have communion with an unholy creature ; nor can man, in his unregenerated state, have communion with God. Suppose an unregenerated person, destitute of holiness, were admitted into heaven, could he be happy there ? Could he be happy in the presence of God, whose mind is carnal, and therefore in enmity against him ?

How could they, who now dislike the service of God, who seldom pray, and never praise God, and delight in his commandments, how could they enjoy the society of heaven, or the holy conversation of the blessed ? How could they be happy in spending an eternity in the worship of God ? Regeneration is, then, absolutely necessary to salvation, in the enjoyment of God.

Let this subject be improved for self-examination. Let us examine ourselves carefully. Have we been born again ? If we are able truly, from Scriptural evidence, to give an affirmative answer to this momentous question, let us give glory to God, and rejoice in hope of the heavenly blessedness ; and live as becometh those who have been begotten again to such a lively and glorious hope. But if we have not Scriptural evidence that we have been born again, let us not hope that we can be in a state of safety. Let us seek the Lord, while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near ; and rest in nothing short of Scriptural evidence, and in our own experience, that we have been born again.

CHAPTER XLIX.

FAITH.

THE great and leading doctrine of divine Revelation, is, that Jesus Christ, God and man in one person, is the only meritorious cause of our salvation; and that he must be acknowledged, and received, as the only mediator between God and man, by a true and saving faith. Faith is indispensably necessary, in order to partake of the salvation which he purchased.

Our attention is therefore called, in this Chapter, to the nature of faith; its efficient cause; and its fruits.

Faith, in general, is a persuasion; or assent of the mind to the truth, upon authentic testimony; and is, either human, or divine faith. Human faith is that whereby we believe what is related by man; and divine faith, whereby we believe what God hath revealed to us. The latter, divine faith, is taken in four different senses.

Historical faith is an assent to the truths of revelation, without any saving benefit, or corresponding practice. It was this kind of faith that James meant, when he said; "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." James ii. 17, 26. This kind of faith devils have, as well as men, as we learn from the same epistle. James ii. 19.

A temporary faith, is a conviction and acceptance of the truth, to a certain degree, as far as it is accompanied with temporal advantages, which is lost, when such advantages diminish, or are lost; and is accompanied with some movings of affection, with a certain kind of relish for divine things, and a joyful frame of mind; which relish and joy arise from the benefits expected, and a false hope of an interest in them; but, as it proceeds from the exercise of mere natural principles, and not from any root of grace in the heart, it is only temporary, and cannot stand the trials of temptation and persecution—

having no root, it withers. This was the kind of faith our Lord spoke of in the parable of the sower; Matt. xiii.; "Behold, a sower went forth to sow. And when he sowed, some seeds fell upon the stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had not root, they withered away. This our Lord explained, in the following chapter: "He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he, that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for, when tribulation, or persecution ariseth because of the Word, by-and-by he is offended."

The faith of miracles, which was peculiar to the primitive state of the church, was the persuasion a person had of his being able, by divine power, to effect a miracle on another, or another on himself. Of the former kind was the faith to remove mountains, cast out devils, and heal diseases, frequently mentioned in the New Testament; and of the latter kind, was the faith to be healed, of which we have an instance in the person who applied to Christ in behalf of his son, who was possessed of an evil spirit. Mark ix. 23. "Jesus said unto him, if thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

All these three kinds of faith, persons may have, and yet not be in a state of salvation; but remain still under condemnation. Saving faith is that principle wrought in the heart, by the Holy Spirit, whereby we not only firmly believe all the doctrines of Holy Scripture; but especially whereby we receive Christ in all his offices, as he is "made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

Saving faith is represented, in Scriptures, under a variety of metaphors and expressions; such as, coming to Christ; receiving him; seeking him; looking to him; laying hold on him; and flying to him for refuge.

The Heidelberg Catechism gives the following definition of faith, in the twenty-first question and answer: "True faith is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God

has revealed to us in his word, but also an assured confidence, which the Holy Ghost works by the Gospel in my heart, that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness, and salvation, are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits."

The three essential constituent parts of faith, according to this definition, are knowledge, assent, and confidence.

First, knowledge. Saving faith necessarily supposes a knowledge of divine truth. How can a man believe that of which he has not heard, or which he does not know? We must first be acquainted with those things which we believe. The truths which are the objects of faith are contained in the word of God. Faith, therefore, supposes a knowledge of the Scriptures, or at least of their fundamental truths. This is confirmed by the apostle, in Romans x. 14, 17:—"How shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Faith supposes a knowledge of all those truths necessary for our salvation:—a knowledge of God, and his glorious character, as possessed of infinite perfections; the Creator and preserver of all things. A knowledge of ourselves, of our sinful and depraved condition, by nature and practice, and our exposure to the divine wrath. A knowledge of Jesus Christ, as a Saviour, as all-sufficient and willing to save us, and the terms on which he will save us.

Secondly, faith supposes assent, whereby we hold for truth all that God has revealed in his word, especially as it respects the person and offices of Christ, as the true Messiah, and Son of God. It is not a bare, naked assent to the truth, such as wicked men, yea, even devils have;—an assent, not upon human, but divine testimony, upon the record which God has given of his Son, and of eternal life in him. Some of the Samaritans believed in Christ, because of the saying of the woman; but others, because of his own word, having heard him themselves; and knew, indeed, that he was the Christ, the Saviour of the world. Thus, true faith embraces him not merely as a Saviour of men in general, but as a special Saviour

in particular ; and is the result of Christ's manifestation to the soul, by the spirit of wisdom and revelation.

A third act of faith, is trust or confidence in him alone for everlasting life and salvation. So soon as the sinner is convinced of his lost and perishing state by nature, and of his utter inability to save himself, and of the all-sufficiency of Christ to save him, he takes refuge in him, hungering and thirsting after his righteousness ; he comes to him poor and wretched, lost and undone, with a sincere desire to be found in him ; not having his own righteousness, but relying entirely upon the merits of his righteousness for the pardon of his sins, and his acceptance with God. Finally, he is enabled to embrace the Saviour, to receive him, and to accept of him, to trust and confide entirely in him for salvation. Now, the Spirit bears witness with his spirit that he is adopted, and become a child of God. The love of God is shed abroad in his heart ; and is ready to say with the Psalmist : " Come, ye that fear the Lord, I will tell you what he has done for my soul."

True and saving faith, although it is common to all believers, yet differs as to the measure and degree. In some it is a full assurance of their acceptance, and being in a state of grace, and of their interest in Christ ; in others, again, faith is weak—it is like a grain of mustard, which is the least of all seeds ; it seems sometimes as if there was no faith at all, but nothing but doubts and fear. However, faith, even that which is the least, differs from no faith. Where there is no faith, there is no desire after God, and Christ, nor after salvation ; but where there is ever so small a degree of faith, there is a panting after God ; a desire to see Jesus, and have fellowship with him ; where there is no faith, there is no sense of the want of it, nor desire, and increase of it ; but where there is faith, though ever so small, the soul is sensible of it, complains of unbelief, and prays for an increase of faith ; " Lord, I believe, help my unbelief."

The author, or efficient cause, of this divine principle, is none else but God. It is the work of God alone, who, by his power and grace, begins, carries on, and finishes it, to the glory of his

sovereign mercy. All the three divine persons are concerned in it. As it respects the Father, our Lord declares, that no man can come to him, that is, believe in him, except the Father draw him. As it respects the Son, Christ is expressly called "the author and finisher of our faith." And, as it respects the Holy Ghost, it is expressly said to be his gift, and of his operation; hence he is called the Spirit of Faith. 2 Cor. iv. 13. Free, and saving faith, as the gift of God, is wrought in the heart by means of his Word. Ministers preach and deliver the Word; the people hear; and God works, by his Spirit, to make it saving and effectual in their salvation. The Word, accompanied with life and power, penetrates the heart. The sinner is now alarmed and awakened, to inquire what he shall do to be saved. The Gospel directs him to look to Christ for salvation. The sinner looks, and so faith is wrought in him by the Holy Spirit. "Faith," saith the apostle, "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Rom. x. Thus it was that three thousand were converted, and brought to believe, on the day of Pentecost, by the preaching of the Gospel.

Faith is a precious gift of God; this will appear by considering its blessed fruits.

By faith, we are justified and adopted into the family of God.

By faith, we are sanctified from all filthiness of the flesh, and the spirit.

By faith, we obtain the victory over the world, and all our enemies.

By faith, Christ dwells in the heart.

Faith works by love to God and man, and is therefore productive of good works.

Faith maketh not ashamed.

Faith makes Christ precious to the soul, and fills it with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

By faith, believers are kept unto salvation, and therefore shall never perish.

Believers live by faith in the Son of God, who loved them; they live spiritually here, and they shall live eternally hereafter.

Before closing this Chapter, I shall answer the question, often

made, whether assurance is the essence of faith, and whether it is attainable in the present life?

If by assurance is meant a full persuasion of the truth of the divine testimony, to whatever subject it relates, we say that it is essential to faith. But if assurance mean an explicit assurance of our salvation, we deny that it is of the essence of faith. We believe that many of the children of God have faith, and are in a state of grace, who do not enjoy this privilege, but are often troubled with doubts and fears; still, it is the duty of all true believers to endeavour to attain this assurance, for their own comfort.

This assurance is attainable in the present life. An apostle exhorts Christians "to make their calling and election sure." 2 Pet. i. 10. They are called upon to examine themselves, "whether they be in the faith." This assurance is not obtained by the direct act of faith, but by reflection. It is the result of evidence, collected by observation and inquiry; that we are possessed of the faith to which salvation is promised. The Christian examines himself, whether he is in possession of faith, and if, by examining himself, he finds the marks of true faith, he concludes: Every man who believes in Christ, shall be saved; but I have believed in him, as is evident from the operations of divine grace in my heart; therefore I shall be saved. We see, then, that this assurance is founded upon the promises of the Gospel, and the inward evidence of those graces, unto which these promises are made, the Spirit, at the same time, bearing witness, with our spirits, that we are the children of God.

The way in which Christians may attain this assurance, is not by immediate revelation from God. Nor is this blessing to be obtained by sudden impulses upon the mind, or by dreams or visions, or supposed supernatural voices, or by any such means; but we must go to the law and the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Is. viii. 20.

We must diligently study the word of God, and make ourselves acquainted with it; and with all the traits of the Chris-

tian character. We ought to attend on the appointed means of grace, and be much engaged in prayer and frequent self-examination; and live near to God, with watchfulness over all our thoughts, words, desires, and inclinations, and persevere in the path of duty. Let weak Christians be encouraged to seek this assurance; and those who have obtained it, let them praise God for his goodness. Let them walk humbly before God, and distinguish themselves for good works and for holiness of life, to the glory of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.

CHAPTER L.

JUSTIFICATION.

JUSTIFICATION is an act of God's free grace, whereby he acquits the penitent and believing sinner of all his sins, and the punishment due to sin, and grants him a right and title to eternal life, only on account of the righteousness of Christ, imputed to him by faith.

Justification is a fundamental article of our holy religion. An error, as it respects the doctrine, is essential, and affects the whole Christian system. It was justly termed by Luther, "*articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ*," the article of a standing or falling church; because, according to the views which are adopted in any church with respect to the means of regaining the favour of God, true piety and holiness will flourish or decline in it.

Justification is a forensic term, derived from courts of judicature; and is opposed to condemnation. It denotes not a change of a person's dispositions, but a change of his state in relation to the law. It does not make him righteous by an infusion of holy habits, but pronounces him righteous on valid grounds.

This appears, from many passages, to be the meaning of the Hebrew word, צִדִּיק, *adek*, and the Greek word, δικαιοσω. If there be a controversy among men, and they come into judgment that the judges may judge them, then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked. Deut. xxv. 1.

In the same forensic *sense*, the word δικαιοσω is used in the New Testament, as in the following: Matt. xi. 19; Luke xvi. 15, xviii. 14; Rom. ii. 13, viii. 33, 34; v. 16.

It is unnecessary to multiply proofs, as the matter is abundantly plain. Justification is a change, not of our nature, but of our state; the former belongs to sanctification.

The author of justification is God. "It is God that justifieth." The person to be justified is accountable to him, as his Creator and lawgiver, and by his sentence he must stand or fall. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. James iv. 12.

The person who is justified, is a sinner. "God justifieth the ungodly." Rom. iv. 5.

The sinner is considered as one who has violated the law, and the design of the sentence is to set him free from the consequences of transgression. If he were not a sinner, there would be no need of his justification in the sight of God; for he would already be justified.

In justification, the sinner is acquitted from every charge of transgression which is brought against him by the law; and secondly, he is accounted to have fulfilled, or on some ground treated as if he had fulfilled its demands.

Justification consists of two parts; namely, the forgiveness of sin, and acceptance as righteous, including a title to eternal life.

That both these benefits belong to justification, is evident from the Scriptures. Rom. v. 1, 2. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoiced in hope of the glory of God. Here, having peace with God, refers to pardon of sin; and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, implies a title to eternal life.

Both these benefits are also included in the following passages: as Acts xxvi. 18; John v. 24.

The pardon which is granted in justification, is full; extending to all the transgressions of the guilty persons. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Matt. xii. 31. By him, all that believe are justified of all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. Acts xiii. 39.

With respect to past and present sins, there is no doubt that they are immediately remitted. But the question may be asked, Are likewise all those forgiven, of which he may be guilty afterwards? We reply: When a sinner obtains an interest in the atonement made by the blood of Christ, the same blood which secures him against condemnation for those which are past and present, must secure him with respect to those which are future.

When, therefore, the justified sinner falls, through the treachery of his heart, and the influence of temptation, into sin, this is no reason why his pardon should be revoked. Conscious of demerit, he may dread the consequence, and be alarmed, when he thinks on the requisitions of the law, and the justice of God, which he has offended, and cannot appease; yet, by renewing his repentance, and humbling himself before God, and still relying on the blood of atonement for pardon, his fears of final condemnation are removed, and he is enabled to rejoice in the Lord, and in the God of his salvation. The guilt of conscience is removed, and the peace of God takes possession of his soul.

Let us proceed to consider the way in which a sinner is justified in the sight of God. There are only two ways in which it can be conceived to be acquired; by our own personal obedience, or by the imputation of the righteousness of another. On account of our own personal obedience, or on account of our own righteousness, or any thing we can do, we cannot be justified. This may be proved from the demands of the law. The demands of the law are so extensive, that no man living can comply with them. It requires obedience to all its precepts, without a single exception; Gal. iii. 10; Deut. xxvii. 26;

obedience absolutely perfect; a failure in one act, or in the motive from which it is performed, being sufficient to invalidate the whole; Matt. xxii. 37-39; and obedience continued unto the end of life.

To every person who considers the extent of these demands, it will appear absolutely impossible, for the descendants of Adam, in their present state of weakness and depravity, to fulfil them. In addition to this, were it possible that perfect obedience could be rendered to the law by one who had once been a sinner, there could be no merit in this, after perfect obedience, to satisfy the law for past offences; because, when we have done all, we have only done our duty. How can it be possible that we can atone for past offences, and be justified on account of our own righteousness, when we are continually sinning, and our best works come short of what a holy and just law requires? Hence we see that it is impossible, in the very nature of things, that the sinner should be justified on account of his own righteousness. The notion of sinless perfection, as attainable in this life, which is maintained by some, proceeds from minds disordered by enthusiasm, and from profound ignorance of human nature, and the divine law.

That the sinner cannot be justified on account of his personal obedience, is clearly taught in the Word of God, "knowing," says the apostle, "that a man is not justified by the works of the law. By the works of the law shall no man be justified." Gal. ii. 16, iii. 11; Rom. iii. 20, 28. The Scriptures declare, that we are not only not justified by our works, as the principal ground, but that they have not the least influence in our justification before God. There are some, who, though they admit that their works are insufficient, yet trust, in part, to them, and where they are deficient, they pretend to trust in the grace of God to make up the deficiency. But what does the apostle say: Christ, he tells us, is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace. Gal. v. 4. In this passage, he teaches, that they who seek justification by the works of the law, can have no part in the grace of Christ. The same truth is taught in Rom. xi. 6.

From what has been said, we conclude, that our own righteousness is not, and cannot be, either in whole or in part, the ground of a sinner's justification. If, therefore, we are justified, it must be in virtue of a righteousness wrought out for us by another, adequate to the undertaking. The law must be fulfilled for us, by rendering a perfect obedience to it, and suffering its penalty. Such a righteousness has been wrought out by our Lord Jesus Christ, who was in every respect qualified to be the mediator between God and man. He, the Son of God, co-equal with the Father, took upon him our nature, rendered a perfect obedience to the whole law, suffered its penalty, by making his soul an offering for sin. By his obedience and death, he made full satisfaction to Divine justice for sin, magnified the law, and wrought out a righteousness; on account of which, God can be just, and yet the justifier of sinners. It is solely on account of the righteousness of Christ, that we are justified. Hence he is called the Lord our righteousness, Jer. xxiii. 6; and the apostle declares, that we are "justified by his blood," and "by his obedience," Rom. v. 9, 18, 19; that we are made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. v. 21; and that he "of God is made unto us righteousness," 1 Cor. i. 30.

But how is the sinner justified on account of the righteousness of Christ? We answer, By imputation. By imputation, we do not mean that Christ's holiness is transfused into his soul; for justification, as we have stated, is not a change of our nature, but our state. By imputation, we do not mean that the righteousness of Christ is actually transferred to believers; in consequence of which it becomes literally theirs, as the garment of one man becomes, by his gift, the property of another. The righteousness of Christ must ever be inherent in himself, and it can be imparted to others only in a legal sense. God, therefore, cannot account those to be personally righteous, whom he knows to be personally guilty. But he may treat them as righteous, in consideration of the righteousness of another. He may pardon their sins, and receive them into favour, and give them a title to eternal life. And this is what we understand by imputation, and the only way in which the

Redeemer's righteousness becomes ours. It is ours because, on account of it, God deals with us as if we were righteous in ourselves; but he cannot look upon us as really righteous, any more than we can look on a person as really meritorious, who is rewarded for the merit of another.

The imputation of Christ's righteousness in justification, then, does not consist in accounting us in any sense righteous in ourselves, but in treating us, for his sake, as if we were righteous.

In this righteousness of Christ, we become interested by faith; and hence we are said to be justified by faith. This is very frequently taught in the Scriptures, and especially in Paul's Epistle to the Romans. We are justified by faith, not on account of any merit in it.

Faith is only the means or instrument of justification.

Faith is the instrument by which we receive him; the hand with which we take the gift which God freely bestows.

There can therefore be nothing meritorious in it, as deserving justification, no more than the act of a pauper, receiving offered charity, has merit in it rendering him deserving of that charity. And further, this very faith is the gift of God; and therefore cannot be meritorious. "For by grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Eph. ii. 8.

It may be objected, that although the Scriptures do in many places speak as if we were justified by faith alone, yet there are other passages which appear to favour the doctrine of justification by works. For instance: James says, "Ye see how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." James ii. 24. Apparently, James contradicts Paul, who teaches that we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law. But there is, in reality, no contradiction between these two apostles. The difference is only apparent, and their writings perfectly harmonize; this is evident from the following remarks:

First, Paul and James had not the same design in view. Paul's design was to show that a sinner is pardoned, accepted, and entitled to heaven, not on account of his works, but through faith in the blood of Christ, and the imputation of his righteous-

ness. The design of James was not to inform a man how he shall obtain the favour of God, but to convince him that if his faith is barren and dead, he is in a state of condemnation, notwithstanding his profession and his hopes.

Secondly, Paul and James do not speak of the same faith. The faith of which Paul speaks, is the instrument of our justification, the fruit of the spirit, a living and active principle, which purifies the heart and excites to universal obedience. But the faith of which James speaks, is a mere speculative faith, a dead faith, a body without the soul, a faith without good works accompanying it.

Lastly, Paul and James do not speak of the same justification. Paul shows how we are justified before God by faith, and James, how we are justified before men; he asks how other men shall know that we are justified, and answers that they will know it by our works.

When we consider that Paul and James had different designs, and that they speak of different kinds of faith and justification, we perceive that, notwithstanding an apparent discrepancy, the doctrine of the one perfectly harmonizes with the other.

To conclude: Justification is a glorious privilege of believers. Being justified, they are adopted into the family of God as children for Christ's sake; as children, they have free access unto God; and God, as their Father, loves them, and provides for them, and finally bestows upon them an heavenly inheritance. They are not only adopted as children, but they have peace with God, peace of conscience, and peace with all men.

CHAPTER LI.

SANCTIFICATION.

SANCTIFICATION is that act of God's free grace, whereby believers are gradually cleansed from the remains of sin and indwelling corruption, and renewed after the image of God.

Sanctification, in its first and plain meaning, signifies a separation from common usages to higher and sacred purposes. Thus, under the law of Moses, the Sabbath, the temple, and vessels employed in the sacrifices, were said to be sanctified; that is, they were set apart for holy purposes. Thus the priests, under the Old Testament, and ministers, under the New, are, by virtue of their offices, sanctified, or peculiarly appointed and separated to the worship of God; and thus also Christians are, by baptism, dedicated to the service of God, and by profession his people are sanctified. But this sanctification is merely external. Sanctification, the subject of this Chapter, is internal—a sanctification of the heart.

The Author of this grace, is God alone. It is ascribed to the Father in all those passages in which prayer is offered up to him, that he would sanctify us, and make us perfect in every good work; and in which he promises to circumcise our hearts to love and fear him, and to give us a new heart and a right spirit. 1 Thes. v. 23; Heb. xiii. 21; Deut. xxx. 6; Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

This work is ascribed to Jesus Christ, "who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Tit. ii. 14.

This work is ascribed to the Holy Ghost. Hence we read of the renovation and sanctification of the spirit. 2 Thes. ii. 13. The grace by which we are sanctified, proceeds from the Father by the Son, and is applied by the Spirit. The

manner in which it is effected by the Spirit, we are unable to explain ; therefore, without attempting to describe the nature of this power, and the mode of exercising it, let us content ourselves with the general knowledge of the fact, that it is owing to the operation of the Divine spirit upon the soul, that it is sanctified. Sanctification extends to the whole man, and to all his powers and faculties, both of body and soul.

It is a known fact, that man, by the fall, though he lost none of his natural faculties, nevertheless lost all those holy qualities with which the faculties were endued, and which constituted the image of God, in which he was created. Before he fell, his understanding was spiritually illuminated, his will was righteous, and disposed to choose the good, and refuse evil ; all his affections were holy, and the members of his body were used, as instruments of righteousness, to the glory of his Creator.

But in consequence of his apostasy, he has forfeited the image of God ; the understanding became darkened, his will perverse, and wholly inclined to disobey, his affections became alienated from God, and the members of his body were yielded as instruments of unrighteousness and sin. Sanctification, then, consists in restoring the whole man, soul and body, from the awful consequences of the fall, and renewing him after the image of God.

This work is commenced in regeneration ; the principle of spiritual life is there implanted, and the man is renewed in knowledge after the image of God, and in true righteousness and holiness. This work, thus commenced in regeneration, is carried on in sanctification. It is true, as soon as the sinner is regenerated, and justified, he is likewise sanctified ; however, there is a difference between justification and sanctification. Justification is an act completed at once ; sanctification is a work which is gradual and progressive. Justification removes the guilt ; sanctification, the pollution of sin. In justification, sin is pardoned ; in sanctification, it is subdued ; and the subject of divine grace is gradually renewed, and fitted for eternal glory.

Sanctification may be considered as consisting of two parts.

The first consists in dying unto sin. This duty is set forth, in Scriptures, under a variety of figures and expressions. It is sometimes called a mortifying the deeds of the body; or, the members that are upon the earth. Sometimes a crucifixion — a crucifying of the old man; of the flesh, with its affections and lusts; and sometimes a cutting off, and plucking out an offending member.

The Christian, though he has grace implanted in his heart, has still within him the remains of indwelling corruption. These are denominated, in Scriptures, the flesh that lusteth against the spirit; a law in the members, warring against the law of the mind; the old man, and members of a body.

These remaining corruptions prompt the Christian to sin. Sanctification, then, consists in denying these corrupt propensities; in denying the sinful gratifications of the flesh, and not indulging in those things which are displeasing to God, and forbidden in his Word; but in watching against them, and endeavouring to weaken them, and obtaining a complete victory over them.

This is indeed a difficult work, which requires more than ordinary support. Inward corruptions are so strong, and numerous temptations from without, often so press upon the Christian, as to call forth all the exercises of Christian graces. Effectually to resist, and finally to overcome them, is a difficult work, and is therefore called, in Scripture, a warfare.

Sanctification, or dying unto sin, is universal in its extent. It is not merely a forsaking, or denying, this or the other sin, particularly; but it respects every sin, even those that are dear to us as a right eye, or a right hand. Hence, those who struggle against their corruptions partially, and not universally, and who, while they reform and deny themselves in some particulars, indulge in those sins, on which their hearts are naturally bent, cannot be the people of God; for God's people hate all sin, and have respect unto all the commandments of God.

This self-denial, this mortification of the old man, is con-

sidered, by the world, as a very gloomy exercise. But, no wonder men in their unrenewed state, supremely love sin, and hate holiness, and their supreme happiness consists in gratifying their sinful propensities. As long, therefore, as they continue in that state, they will esteem it a gloomy exercise.

But the case is different with the Christian. His heart being changed, and grace reigning there, he is led to hate sin, and to delight in, and love holiness. Difficult as the duty of self-denial may be, he derives happiness from it, a happiness far beyond that which carnal men derive from the indulgence of their sinful inclinations.

The other part of sanctification is living unto righteousness, or in an holy obedience to all the commandments of God, in the exercise of all the duties we owe to God and man. "Give all diligence," says Peter, "and add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness kindness, and to kindness, charity." And Paul, in writing to the Galatians, says; "The fruits of the Spirit, are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law."

The duties we owe to God, are love and fear, hope and trust, worship, adoration, gratitude, and praise. The duty we owe to our neighbour, is to love him as ourselves; that is, to do all in our power to promote his present and eternal happiness, both in soul and body. Love to God, and love to man, are the two principal duties required in sanctification, and from which all the others flow. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God; and thy neighbour as thyself." Matt. xxii.

Let us observe here, that sanctification is not perfect, in this life. Believers are not perfectly delivered from sin; neither do they perfectly keep God's commandments. Their sanctification is gradual, and will not be completed until death separates the soul from the body. This assertion agrees, both with the Scriptures, and the standards of our faith. The Catechism, Question 114, says; that "even the holiest men, while in this life, have only small beginnings of this obedience; yet so, that

with a sincere resolution, they begin to live, not only according to some, but all the commands of God." The Scriptures declare, that there is no man that sinneth not; that there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not. If we say, that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. As long as believers remain here below, there are two contrary principles, of flesh and spirit, dwelling in them, and causing a continual conflict in their souls, which lasts unto the moment of their deliverance by death; therefore they daily pray for the forgiveness of their sins. The apostle Paul, who had arrived to high attainments in sanctification, disclaims any pretension to perfection. The language which he gives, of his own experience on this subject, is the language, not only of humanity, but of truth. "I see," he says, "a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." Rom. vii. 23.

The doctrine of perfection in the present state, could be conceived only by men who were ignorant of Scripture, and of themselves.

Sanctification, in both its branches, is a work of God's free grace. We are as much dependent on Divine Power, to sanctify, as to call and to regenerate. If Christians, after regeneration, were left to themselves, no grace received would be sufficient to enable them to maintain an effectual warfare against their corruptions, or to live in the holy performance of required duties. Their lusts would reign, and have dominion over them; and duty would soon be relinquished, or performed in a formal manner, without those holy principles which are necessary to constitute holy obedience.

Without Christ, we can do nothing. He is the head, believers are members; he is the vine, they are the branches. As well might the members live, cut off from communication with the head, or the branches separated from the vine, as the soul of the Christian continue spiritually alive, separated from Christ, and without continual supplies of nourishment and strength from him. It is out of his fulness, that we must daily receive

new supplies of grace; grace, to sanctify us, and to carry on the good work begun in regeneration. The pattern according to which believers are sanctified, is the holiness of the divine nature, as manifested in Christ; and hence Christ may be considered as the pattern after which believers are sanctified; he gave us the most perfect example of piety and virtue, in the discharge of all the duties we owe to God and man. From his example we learn how we ought to think, and feel, and act, so as to be imitators of God. He has commanded us to follow him, and to imitate his example. Christians are conformed to the image of Christ. They are, indeed, exhorted to be followers of the saints, but in a limited sense, in so far as their life and conduct correspond with the example of Christ. Be ye, says the apostle, followers of Christ, even as I am also of Christ. 1 Cor. xi. 1. Believers must look to Christ, while they are running the race set before them.

The means by which the work of sanctification is carried on, are, the Word of God, read and preached. This is an important and principal means. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth." John xvii. 17. The Word of God teaches us what he forbids, and what we ought, therefore, to avoid; and what he requires; and what we ought, therefore, to do. Besides, it contains numerous motives, calculated to strengthen us against sin, and influence us to the performance of duty. The Lord's Supper is also a means of sanctification. Prayer and watchfulness are important means, for we are exhorted to be constant in prayer; to watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation; and to ask, that we may receive.

Self-examination is another means, of such importance, that it is scarcely possible, that the work of sanctification can progress, if we are remiss in the performance of this duty. In addition to these means, the Spirit of God often uses afflictions to carry on the work of sanctification in the soul. For we read, Rom. v. 3, 4, Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and in Hebrews xii. 1, we are told, that "chastisements yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby."

The fruits of sanctification are good works. By good works we understand, as comprehending the whole duty of man, prescribed in both tables of the law. As it respects the nature of good works, we must observe, that something is necessary to make a work good, in itself; and that other things are necessary to make it good as performed by us. That a work may be good in itself, it must be enjoined by the law of God, the sole rule of obedience; no work is, therefore, good in itself, unless it be commanded. That a work may be good, performed by us, it must be done from respect to the authority of God; it must flow from love to God, and be performed for the glory of God. The standards of our faith say, that "those only are good works, which proceed from a true faith;" Rom. xiv. 23; "are performed according to the laws of God;" 1 Sam. xv. 22; Eph. ii. 2, 10; "and to his glory," 1 Cor. x. 31, "and not such as are founded on our imaginations, or institutions of men." Deut. xii. 32; Ezek. xx. 18; Matt. xv. 9. Good works are necessary; not as the ground of our justification and acceptance with God; but, as Question 86 of the Catechism teaches, "that we may testify, by the whole of our conduct, our gratitude to God for his blessings, and that he may be praised by us: also, that every one may be assured in himself of his faith, by the fruits thereof; and that, by our godly conversation, others may be gained to Christ." To conclude, sanctification is indispensably necessary; "For without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Those who are strangers to this work ought to be alarmed, to seek the sanctifying grace of God, that they may have a title to eternal life; and Christians, who have evidence that this work has begun in their souls, ought to seek after increasing degrees of sanctification.

CHAPTER LII.

PERSEVERANCE.

THE important doctrine to which we propose to call your attention, in this Chapter, is the “saint’s perseverance;” by which we mean, that all those who are true believers, who are savingly united to the Lord Jesus Christ by a true faith, shall most certainly hold on their way — shall be preserved from total or final apostasy, and shall be kept, by the power of God, through faith, unto eternal life.

Upon this subject, professed Christians are divided in sentiment. The doctrine of our Church is expressed in the first, and fifty-fourth Questions of the Catechism. In the first, it is said, that “believers are so kept, or ‘preserved,’ that, without the will of their heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from their head;” and, in the fifty-fourth Question, it is said, that the Son of God “preserves his chosen Church, unto everlasting life.”

It is well known, that the followers of Arminius maintain a very different doctrine; and that this is one of the articles by which their creed is distinguished from that of the followers of Calvin. Their sentiments are thus expressed by themselves. “True believers may apostatize from the true faith, and fall into such sins, as are inconsistent with true and justifying faith; and may continue, and die in the same, and consequently, may finally fall into perdition.”

As this doctrine is greatly misrepresented, and misunderstood, it is necessary, before we proceed to advance the arguments upon which it is founded, to make a few preliminary observations.

First, then, by the doctrine of the “saint’s perseverance,” we do not mean, or intend, the perseverance of false professors, or

hypocrites. There are many, who profess to be, and are called saints, who are not such, in reality ; there are many who appear to be pious, who are yet utter strangers to the experience of true grace, and deceive themselves and others. Now we do not maintain that such shall persevere ; on the contrary, it is admitted, that they may entirely fall from their profession, and be lost. By the perseverance of the saints we mean, the perseverance of those who are such in reality and in truth, without disguise or deception — those who have been born again, and savingly united to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the next place, by the perseverance of the saints, we do not mean that believers may not fall into sin. It is granted that they, under the influence of temptation, may commit great sins. We have two remarkable examples in Scripture. The first is David, who seduced the wife of his neighbour, and then devised the murder of her husband. The second is Peter, who denied his Lord. These two examples, strong as they seem, are by no means conclusive against the doctrine we mean to prove.

Though David's crime was great, yet he did not totally lose all religious principle. This may be inferred from his prayer, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me," Ps. li. 11 ; in which it is implied, that the Spirit had not utterly withdrawn from him, although it was a punishment which he truly deserved.

The same remark may be made upon Peter ; in whom we are assured, by the prayer of our Saviour for him, that faith remained even at the time he had renounced it in words. Luke xxii. 31.

We assert that believers may fall partially, but they cannot fall totally or finally from grace, so as to perish. Though they may fall partially, yet the seeds of grace which at regeneration were implanted in them, remain.

And once more : By the perseverance of the saints, we do not mean that the people of God shall be saved, let them live as they may ; but that they shall be saved by being enabled to continue and persevere in faith and every other grace.

The end and the means of salvation are inseparably connected together. Nor do we mean that they shall persevere by their own power, or in virtue of their own deserts, but by the power of God, and in virtue of the Divine promises.

We proceed to prove the doctrine by a variety of arguments :

First, it is proved from a consideration of the perfections of God. God is immutable, and possessed of infinite love, faithfulness, wisdom, and power. Should he suffer any of his people finally to fall into perdition, this would be a reflection on his attributes, and argue him to be worse than a common father of his family.

The love of God is unchangeable to his people, and therefore they cannot be the objects of it at one time, and not at another. John xiii. 1 ; Zeph. iii. 17 ; Jer. xxxi. 3.

God is faithful to fulfil his promise, which is founded not upon their merit, but his own will and goodness ; this, therefore, cannot be violated. Matt. iii. 6 ; Num. xxiii. 19.

God, as an all-wise Being, foresees every obstacle in the way, and is capable of removing it, and directing them into the right path. It would be a reflection on his wisdom, after choosing a right end, not to choose right means in accomplishing the same. Jer. x. 6, 7.

God is an almighty Being ; his power is insuperable, and is absolutely and perpetually displayed in their preservation and protection. 1 Peter i. 5.

Secondly, the saint's perseverance is proved from the relations which believers sustain to the Lord Jesus Christ. They are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Eph. i. 4. He purchased them by his death ; as the good shepherd, he laid down his life for his sheep, and has engaged to watch over, protect, and defend them ; he knows his sheep, and he gives them eternal life, and they shall never perish. Believers are united to him as their head. This spiritual union which they sustain to him as members of his body, is the closest and tenderest ; as close as that which exists between the branches

and the vine, as tender as that which exists between husband and wife. Is it, then, possible that he will allow the members, the parts of his body to be torn from him, and to perish for ever, when he has it in his power to keep them? He is the great Advocate and Intercessor in behalf of his people. Heb. vii. "He ever liveth to make intercession for them." He interceded for them while on earth, John xvii.; and now he is gone to heaven to plead their cause before his Father's throne.

As his intercession is all powerful and prevalent, it follows that not a single soul which has fled to him for refuge, and committed itself into his hands, shall perish. Hence we see, if there be a possibility of believers finally falling, then this choice, this union, this death and intercession, may all be in vain, and rendered abortive, to the dishonour of the Divine glory.

Thirdly, the perseverance of the saints is evident from the inhabitation, the work, and operations of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers. The Spirit dwells in them as his temple. He was promised, and given to abide with the Apostles, and all true believers, for ever. John xiv. 16.

Again: The Saviour says that the water he shall give, shall be in believers a well of water springing up into everlasting life. John iv. 14. The meaning is, the water shall never cease, or the Spirit shall never be withdrawn, but shall continue with those to whom he has been given, till the work of their salvation is completed.

There are two offices assigned to the Holy Spirit, from which we draw the same conclusion. He is said to seal believers, and to be the earnest of their future inheritance. They are both mentioned in the following passage: "Who hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." 2 Cor. i. 21, 22.

A seal is the particular impression, image, or stamp, by which an individual designates his own acts or property. Among men, it denotes the secrecy, inviolability, and security of things sealed. By the seal of the Spirit, is meant the im-

pression upon the soul of the image of God, by which the believer is set apart and distinguished as God's peculiar property, and by which the highest evidence is afforded him, that he is an heir of eternal life. Now, can we believe that God thus gives his seal to an individual, and yet that this seal can be broken and annulled? Can we believe that God seals an individual unto the day of redemption, and yet that that individual should fail of salvation?

An earnest is a part given as a security for the future possession of the whole. The spirit is represented as an earnest to assure us that the work which he has begun in the soul of believers, he will "perform to the day of Jesus Christ"—an assurance that he will not desist.

He imparts sometimes to them the foretaste and glimpses of heavenly glory in this life; and if they have the earnest in this world, should they be disappointed as it respects the full possession in the next? If they have a part, shall they not in due time possess the whole?

Lastly, I shall mention one other argument, which of itself would be sufficient to prove this doctrine; that is the nature and promises of the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace is an everlasting and sure covenant. 2 Sam. ii. 35; Is. lxi. 8, liv. 3; Jer. xxxii. 40.

From these passages, we learn that the covenant of grace to which believers belong, is an everlasting and sure covenant. But how can it be so, if it can be done away, or believers perish? But that it shall not be done away, and that no believer interested in it shall perish, we learn not only from the nature of the covenant as everlasting and sure, but also from the many promises of perseverance contained in it. The promises of the covenant you find contained in the following passages: Jer. xxxii. 40; Is. liv. 10; John v. 24, vi. 39, x. 27, 28, iv. 14; 1 Cor. i. 8, 9; Phil. i. 6; 1 Thes. v. 23, 24; Heb. xiii. 5; 1 Pet. i. 5.

In these texts, the most positive promises of perseverance are made: for it is asserted that the Lord will not turn away

from his people to do them good; that they shall not depart from him; that his kindness shall not depart from them; that they shall not come into condemnation; that they shall never thirst, never perish; that because Christ lives, they shall live; that they shall be confirmed unto the end; that the good work begun in them, will be performed unto the day of Jesus Christ; that their whole spirit, soul and body, shall be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; that a faithful God will establish and keep them from evil; that he never will leave nor forsake them; and that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. And in Romans viii. 38, 39, their final perseverance is set forth in the strongest expressions.

These are some of the glorious promises of the covenant of grace. And will not the Lord be faithful to his promises? will he not fulfil them? Can it be possible that, after all these promises have been made, believers can be left to fall away and finally to be lost? It is impossible. Therefore they shall persevere, and be kept, not by their own power, but by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation.

As, however, several objections have been made to this doctrine, it will be proper to notice, and endeavour to answer them.

It is objected, that David, Solomon, Peter, and other good men, have fallen into sin. This has already been noticed, and shown that though they grievously fell, yet that they did not fall totally, but partially; and were restored again to their former state of favour with God. This objection can, therefore, not affect the doctrine, unless it can be shown that they fell finally and totally.

Again, it is said, many have fallen of whose recovery we have no account, as, Judas, Demas, Hymeneus, and Alexander. In answer to this objection, we say; that we know nothing of these persons, which leads us necessarily to conclude that they ever possessed saving faith; and it is readily granted, that men

may fall from their profession of Christ, yea, from apparent piety. In relation to such characters, the words of John are applicable; 1 John ii. 3; they went out from us; but they were not of us; for had they been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us.

Again, those texts which speak of persons fallen away from certain attainments, and perishing, are urged as arguments against the doctrine, such as the following: When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, shall he live? Ez. xviii. 24; all his righteousness that he has done shall not be mentioned; in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin, that he hath sinned, shall he die. When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. Ezek. xxxiii. 18. It is impossible, for those who were once enlightened, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance. Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin. 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21.

The answer that may be given to these, and similar texts of Scripture, is, that all these characters, here described, come short of saving grace. There is not an expression, in one of these texts, that necessarily implies a justifying righteousness, or saving grace. They may all be explained to mean an apparent, or a moral righteousness, great knowledge, and miraculous gifts.

It is further objected, that believers are frequently exhorted to be faithful, and are cautioned against apostasy; and that these exhortations and cautions would be unnecessary, if Christians will certainly persevere. But let it be remembered, while God has determined to give his people persevering grace, he has determined to give it to them only in the way of diligence in duty; and these exhortations and cautions are a part of God's plan to secure their diligence and final perseverance.

Finally, it is said that this doctrine has a tendency to lead

to licentiousness. It is true, this, as well as all the other doctrines of grace, may be abused by carnal professors; but the doctrine itself gives no countenance to licentiousness. It can be no reasonable objection to a doctrine, that bad men make a bad use of it. If a person lives in sin, and does not lead a holy life, this is a sure proof that he is not in a state of grace.

They who draw motives to negligence from this doctrine, and live in carnal security, are strangers to the saving grace which will be abiding, and they have great cause to be alarmed in time to consider the things that belong to their peace. But to Christians, who have Scriptural evidence of their union to Christ, this doctrine affords great consolation, in life, in death, and as it respects eternity.

CHAPTER LIII.

ON THE CHURCH.

THE word Church has various significations, in the Holy Scriptures. The term is used as equivalent to the Hebrew word *קהל*, *kahal*, and the Greek word, *εκκλησια*.

Kahal signifies a congregation, or a number of persons gathered together, and *εκκλησια* denoted, among the Greeks, an assembly of the people, convoked by lawful authority.

The word *εκκλησια* bears a variety of senses. It is not certain that it anywhere signifies, in the New Testament, the place of meeting for the worship of God. The passage of Scripture referred to for the support of this opinion, is found 1 Cor. xi. 22. But it does not appear, from this passage, that a material edifice or building, is to be understood.

The Church, sometimes, denotes a single family, or rather a

few individuals associated together in observing the institutions of the Gospel. This appears from such passages as the following: "Greet the church that is in the house of Aquila and Priscilla." "Salute the church which is in the house of Nymphas." Rom. xvi. 5; Col. iv. 15.

Again, the Church signifies all the Christians in a particular city, whether they assembled for religious offices in one place, or in several places. Thus we read, Acts xiii. 1, "Now there were in the Church that was at Antioch, certain prophets and teachers." All the disciples in that city were accounted one Church, while it is evident that they were too many to form only one congregation. We are told there was "a great number," and, much people, in the city of Antioch, so that it is incredible that they could all have convened in one building, and much less in a private house. In the same sense, the word is used in reference to Jerusalem. The disciples, there, are represented as one Church. Acts xi. 21, 26. But that there were more assemblies than one, in that city, is plain, not only from the number of converts specified in the Acts, many of whom might be strangers, who afterwards removed to different places, but from the fact that the apostles continued a long time in it after the day of Pentecost; not, surely, to minister to a single society of believers; and that the poor were so numerous, that not one deacon, but seven, were appointed to superintend their concerns.

Again, the Church signifies all the disciples of Christ, throughout the world. Thus, in the following passages, the meaning of the term comprehends all, in every country, and in every age, who acknowledge Christ as their spiritual head: "The Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it." The Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. Acts xx. 28; Eph. v. 25; 1 Tim. iii. 15.

I observe, in the last place, that the word has been supposed to mean, not a whole religious society; but only the office bearers in it.

This meaning it has in the passage recorded in Matt. xviii. 17: "And if he shall neglect to hear thee, tell it to the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." From this passage, it is clear, that the offending brother is to be brought before the Church for judgment; and, if he remain obstinate, to be excommunicated. As the power of government is not in the hands of the people, but in those who preside over them, consequently the Church must here mean the ministers and rulers.

The Church is usually distinguished into the visible and invisible. The visible Church consists of all those, throughout the world, that profess the true religion, without any essential error, together with their children. The visible Church is not to be sought in this, or the other sect, or denomination of Christians, but is constituted of, and comprehends the various sects, differing from each other, in some particulars, but united in acknowledging the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as the rule of faith and practice, and observing the ordinances of the Gospel.

Hence it follows, that if the visible Church consists of those persons who profess the true religion without mixture, or essential error, all those who deny the fundamental articles of the Christian religion; likewise all who are ignorant of the doctrines of religion, disregard its ordinances, and openly transgress its laws, are excluded, and cannot be considered as belonging to it.

The Church is called visible, because, as a society, it consists not of angels, or separate spirits; but of men dwelling in mortal flesh, and, as such, falls under the observance of our senses.

The invisible Church includes all true believers; or, in other words, it is the congregation of those who have been called, by divine grace, into the fellowship of the Gospel, and sanctified by the truth. They constitute one congregation, united by closer bonds than those of external communion, however distant in place, or diversified in circumstances they may be. They are all, as Paul expresses it, baptized by one Spirit, into

one body : whether they be Jews or Greeks, bond or free, they have all been made to drink into that Spirit. 1 Cor. xii. 13. The visible church comprehends a mixture of saints and sinners, of chaff and grain, of wheat and tares ; but the invisible church is pure ; not that the individuals who compose it are perfect, in a legal sense ; but that they are all of one description, born by the Spirit unto a new life. This is the true Church, in which God dwells, to which the most precious promises are given. This is the body of Christ, to which he communicates the influences of his Spirit ; by which they are enabled to grow and increase in the divine life. This Church is called the invisible, because it cannot be discovered by the eye. As we cannot see into the heart, and, from various causes, may suppose saints to be hypocrites, and hypocrites to be saints, we are liable to err, in passing judgment upon others. But he that searches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men, "The Lord, and he only," knows them that are his. The members of the invisible Church are unknown to the world, as it respects their internal qualifications, seeing their faith and love are not the objects of sense. They lie hidden in the visible Church, from which they cannot certainly be distinguished.

Further, the Church is distinguished into the Church militant, and the Church triumphant. The Church militant is here on earth, and is so called, because believers are engaged in the spiritual warfare, wrestling against principalities and powers, struggling with the flesh, and the allurements of the world, and, in some cases, resisting even unto blood, in their opposition to sin.

The Church triumphant is in heaven, and is so called, because believers have obtained a complete victory over their spiritual enemies. The Church militant on earth, and the Church triumphant in heaven, constitute only one Church, one family, the head of which is Christ. They have the same head, and the same spirit animates them ; and, although they are distant from one another, as it respects place, yet they hold communion with one another, participate in each other's joys and sorrows,

and all unite in worshipping Him who sits upon the throne, and the Lamb.

Having considered who the members of the church are, both the visible and invisible, it is not necessary to say anything farther, on the invisible, than that they are true believers — regenerated persons, who have passed from death unto life.

As it respects the qualifications of the members of the visible Church, it will be proper to consider them more particularly. I would, therefore, observe, in the first place, that baptism is an indispensable qualification of the members of the visible Church. “Go,” said Christ, when he commissioned his disciples to establish his Church on earth, “go ye, therefore, and teach,” or rather, as it is in the original, make disciples of “all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Matt. xxviii. 19. They were to be made disciples by baptism; not as if the simple administration of baptism would constitute them such: faith was required, as well as baptism. When the apostles found persons, who, having heard the Gospel, professed faith in Christ, they baptized them, and thus received them into the Church.

Baptism, however, must not be considered as essential to salvation. A person, for instance, by some means, as reading the Word of God, may have been convicted, and savingly enlightened, but may not have had an opportunity of being baptized. Such a person, though he cannot be a member of the visible Church, yet he may be of the invisible, and may be saved, provided there be no fault, on his part, in his not having received this distinguishing badge of Christianity.

When men have an opportunity of entering into the Church by baptism, and willingly and contemptuously neglect the ordinance, they live in violation of the command of Christ, and cannot be saved; for it is the same as to live and die in the habitual violation of any moral precept.

In the next place, a second qualification of the members of the Church, is knowledge. What degree of knowledge is necessary, is not easy to determine, because men differ very

much, in education, in talents, and in opportunities of information. For this reason, it would be inconsistent to demand the same proficiency in all who apply for baptism. But unless a person has some knowledge of his own character by nature and practice—some knowledge of the person, offices and work of Christ—the promises of the Gospel, and the Christian duties incumbent upon him, he cannot make a rational profession of religion, and hence ought not to be admitted into the Church.

A third requisite, or qualification of a Church member, is a profession of faith, or a declaration, explicit or implied, that he really believes the doctrines in which he has been instructed—that he receives Christ as his only Saviour—submits to his authority, and is resolved to render universal obedience to all his commandments.

This profession is made, by some adults, at their baptism; or as those who have been baptized in their infancy, it is made when they come to the years of understanding. After being instructed in the doctrines of the Christian religion, and given evidence of their piety, they are admitted into the communion of the Church, on their public profession. There can be no doubt, that it is the duty of all who have been baptized in their infancy, when they come to the years of discretion, to make a public profession. So long as they continue to neglect this duty, they live in neglect of their salvation. But let this profession be made in a proper manner, having first given evidence of their knowledge, and dedication to God their Redeemer.

The last qualification of the members of the Church, is an exemplary life—a life corresponding with their profession. If men profess to know God, but deny him in works, their profession cannot be sincere: “Ye shall know them by their fruits,” said Christ; “every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.” Matt. vii. 16, 17.

Those who do not manifest the sincerity of their profession by a holy life, whatever their pretensions may be, are, in reality, hostile to the religion of the Redeemer; and a Church is

criminally negligent, and guilty of a violation of her trust, by receiving into her fellowship the profane and worldly.

From what has been advanced, on the necessary qualifications for admission into the visible Church, it follows, that an individual applying to be received into the Church, ought to be possessed of personal piety, and examine himself, whether he has been born again, and is in a state of grace and acceptance with his Maker. But the Church, in the admission of members, is not to proceed by the same rule. God has not given her authority to scrutinize the hearts of candidates, because he has not furnished the means. The gift of discerning spirits, has long since ceased; and the present rulers of the Church can judge only by profession and practice. To attempt to penetrate into the recesses of the soul, is to erect an inquisitorial tribunal for the trial of men's spiritual state; and, as long as there are hypocrites and self-deceit in the world, the sentence pronounced from it will be often exceedingly unjust. Without regeneration, external connexion with the Church will certainly be of no avail. The thing which candidates are required to profess and possess, is godliness, and the rule by which the Church is to proceed is the profession and conduct of the individual.

This was the ground on which the apostles evidently proceeded, in the admission of individuals to the Christian Church and ordinances. The Jews who were converted on the day of Pentecost, were baptized on the ground of their public profession of faith in the truth of the Christian religion. It was on the same principle, or profession, that "Christ was the Son of God"—that the Eunuch was baptized. Acts viii. 37. The same appears in the case of the Jailer, Lydia, the converts of Samaria. In all these, and other cases, recorded in the New Testament, saving faith was the thing required; yet it was on the profession of such faith, that converts were admitted to the Christian Church. The apostles did not pretend to scrutinize the heart; but were determined, by credible evidence and a reasonable judgment, in a man's favour.

In some cases, they were even imposed on, for in all churches planted by their labours, there appear to have been more or less hypocrites and self-deceivers; yet, so long as these preserved a decent profession, and were free from scandalous crimes, the apostles took no measures, and gave no directions for their expulsion. In the case of Paul, it was some time after his conversion, before the disciples had confidence in the sincerity of his profession, which shows that they possessed, and laid claim to no mysterious power of ascertaining the secret state of the soul.

The general characters, or properties of the Church, are the following :

The first, is unity. That is, the Church is one, whether we understand it as visible or invisible. As it respects the invisible Church, all its members are as one, united to Jesus Christ, their head; animated by his Spirit, and joined together into one body.

As it respects the visible Church, although it is divided into different societies, and distinguished by their peculiar tenets, forms of government and usages, yet the Church is one; with the exclusion of all those societies that do not profess the true religion, in all its essential parts. This unity is not destroyed by the minor points in which they disagree.

A second property of the Church is its universality. That is, it is not confined to a particular country or sect, but extends throughout the world, and comprehends all who profess the true religion, and observe the ordinances of the Gospel. It is not universal, in so far as there are many extensive regions and populous nations where it has never been established; but as the time is approaching when "the Heathen shall be given to Christ for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession;" then the light of truth, like that of the sun, will illuminate every region; the whole world will be converted into a temple, and all its inhabitants will be worshippers of the living God.

The third property of the Church, is its perpetuity. The

Church has been subject to various vicissitudes, sufferings and persecutions, but has been protected and preserved to the present day, and will continue to be sustained, until the end of time. "Upon this rock," said Christ, "will I build my Church, and the gates of hell" (*i. e.*, neither death, nor all the powers of darkness,) "shall not prevail against it." Matt. xvi. 18. Even in the most degenerate times, God has had a seed to serve him; a remnant has been saved; as in the days of Elijah, who supposed himself to be the sole worshipper of God, while there were seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to the image of BaaL. Even during the reign of Antichrist, it appears that in some corner or other of Christendom, there were men enlightened by divine grace, who escaped the general pollution, and maintained the truth, at the peril of their lives.

A question may be asked: Is the Church infallible? In answer to this question, we observe, that Papists and Protestants are divided in opinion on this subject. Papists maintain that the Church cannot err; but they disagree in settling the point to which this infallibility extends. They all agree, however, that it is lodged somewhere in the Church, in the Pope, or in a general council, or in both united. Protestants maintain that "synods and councils may err," and have often erred. That the Church may err, and has occasionally erred, is evident, both from the Holy Scriptures, and the history of the Church. Infallibility can be predicated of no assembly, however learned, of no association of professed Christians, and much less of any individual.

Still, there is a sense in which the Church may be said to be infallible. True faith can never be lost, because, if this were possible, the Church would be annihilated. There will be in all generations, some, more or less, who will know and profess the truth. All the true members of the Church are under the unerring guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that, though they may mistake, in some points, and be for some time seduced by temptation, they shall not totally and finally apostatize.

It is the duty of the members of the Christian Church,

earnestly to study to keep the unity of the Spirit, and to dwell together as brethren in the exercise of mutual love and forbearance. It is love that characterizes the disciples of Christ. Opposed to this love, is schism; an evil which is so injurious to the interests of religion. Schismatics are such as have withdrawn from the communion of a Church, and formed themselves into a separate party. Christians cannot separate from the universal Church without renouncing Christianity, and excommunicating themselves from Jesus Christ himself. Separation from any particular Church, with which we stand connected, ought previously to be well considered; we ought not to withdraw from it upon light grounds; nothing is more unbecoming the Christian profession, than the conduct of those who run from one society to another, from restlessness of temper, or in resentment of some occasional offence which has arisen, not from the fault of the Church, but from the imprudence of some individual. This must, however, not be understood so, that a man, when he has connected himself with a Church, should remain in it, whatever may be its doctrine, corruption and practice. But, even then, he is not authorized to separate, till means have been used to remedy them. When every effort has failed, and the prevailing party is determined to persist in corruption of doctrine and practice, then we are at liberty to "go out from among them," and to "obey God, rather than man."

CHAPTER LIV.

THE SACRAMENTS.—BAPTISM.

THE reading and hearing of the Word of God, is the principal mean which is employed for the salvation of men. It is by the Word alone that faith is produced, and the seeds of holiness sown in the heart. By the use of the Holy Sacraments, faith is maintained and strengthened, and is the means of bringing the Christian graces to maturity.

The word Sacrament is borrowed from the Latin, and signifies the military oath, in use among the ancient Romans, which they called sacramentum, by which soldiers bound themselves to be faithful to their general. As in those ordinances which we call sacraments, there is a solemn engagement on the part of the receiver to be faithful to Christ, the word sacraments has been adopted by the primitive fathers as expressive of these ordinances. Sacraments are, according to the confession of our faith, "Holy, visible signs and seals appointed by God for this end, that by the use thereof, he may the more fully declare and seal to us the promises of the Gospel." The sacraments are holy, because they are separated from common use; visible, because we can see them; signs and seals, because they sign and seal the promises of the Gospel, which promises are, "that God grants us freely the remission of sin, and life eternal, for the sake of that one sacrifice Christ accomplished on the cross."

The signs and seals which accompany the sacraments, are assurances on the part of God that the blessings promised in them shall be enjoyed. This is their proper design.

The efficacy of sacraments depends solely upon the Divine blessing. It does not depend upon the piety of him by whom they are administered, whether they shall be efficacious or not

nor does it depend upon the intention of him who administers them, as the Papists erroneously hold. Their efficacy depends on the blessing of Christ, and the operation of his spirit in them that receive them by faith.

Under the Old Testament, there were two Sacraments; namely, the Passover and Circumcision, which by the coming of Christ were done away. The Sacraments of the New Testament, which have come in the room of them, are Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper were instituted by Christ himself, while he was upon earth. These sacraments are still in force. This has been denied by some. But it is certain that Christ instituted these ordinances, and that they were observed by the apostles and disciples after his death, and by the primitive church, and by the church in all ages down to the present time. Besides, there is as much need of these ordinances in future generations, as in the apostolic age; and they have never been abrogated by Divine authority; and no one but he who instituted them, has a right to abrogate them.

That baptism was to continue a sacrament in the Christian church to the end of the world, is evident from the commission which our Saviour gave to his apostles after his resurrection, and the promise which he annexed. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

The promise in these words extends to the end of the world; hence we conclude that the commission to preach and baptize was to continue so long. That the Lord's Supper was to be a standing ordinance in the church, is evident from the words of instruction as given us by Paul: "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." 1 Cor. xi. 26. Whence we learn that in this ordinance, the disciples of Christ were to show forth his death until the end of the world, when he was to come the second time.

Christ instituted only two Sacraments, which are to continue till the end of time; in opposition to this, the Roman Catholics hold to seven; viz. besides Baptism and the Lord's Supper, confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction. As it regards the last five, I would observe that they are not of a Divine institution as Sacraments, and unless they were divinely instituted, we have no right to consider them as such; and they all want some, if not all, of the essential things to a sacrament.

Let us proceed to treat of each of these sacraments in particular.

Baptism comes first in order; and here our attention is called to the nature, the mode, and the subjects of baptism. Baptism has been supposed, by many learned men, to have its origin from the Jewish church; in which they maintain it was the practice, long before Christ's time, to baptize proselytes or converts to their faith, as part of the ceremony of their admission. Num. xix. 19, 20. Others, however, insist that the Jewish proselyte baptism is not by far so ancient; and that John the Baptist was the first administrator of baptism among the Jews.

The baptism of John, and that of our Saviour and his Apostles, have been supposed to be the same; because they agree, it is said, in their subjects, form, and end.

But it must be observed, that though there is an agreement in some particulars, yet there is not in all. The immediate institutor of John's baptism was God the Father, John i. 33; but the immediate institutor of the Christian baptism was Christ, Matt. xxviii. 19. John's baptism was a preparatory rite, referring the subjects to Christ, who was about to confer on them spiritual blessings. Matt. iii. 11. John's baptism was confined to the Jews; but the Christian was common to Jews and Gentiles. Matt. iii. 5-7; xxviii. 19.

It does not appear that John had any formula of administration; but the Christian baptism has; viz. in the name.

It does not appear that John had any formula of administration; but the Christian baptism has: viz. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

The baptism of John was the concluding scene of the legal dispensation, and was, in fact, part of it; and to be considered as one of those "divers washings" among the Jews; for he did not attempt to make any alterations in the Jewish religion, nor did the persons he baptized cease to be members of the Jewish church, on account of their baptism; but Christian baptism is the regular entrance into, and is part of, the evangelical dispensation. Gal. iii. 27.

It does not appear, from the inspired narrative, that any but John himself was engaged as operator in his baptism; whereas Christ himself baptized none; but his disciples, by his authority, and in his name. John iv. 2.

Baptism is to be performed by application of water to the body.

The outward signs and seals in baptism, are water and the sprinkling with water. The water signifies the blood and spirit of Jesus Christ, and the sprinkling with water the cleansing of sin by the blood and spirit of Christ. The manner in which water should be applied to the body, whether by effusion or aspersion, or by immersion, is a question which has divided Christians into different parties.

That immersion is not essential to the validity of the ordinance, but that it is rightly administered by pouring, washing, or sprinkling, we prove,

In the first place, from the original word *baptizo*, which is derived from *bapto*. The word *bapto* is never used, when the ordinance of baptism is meant.

However, as this is the root from which *baptize* is derived, it will be proper to make a few observations upon it. It is acknowledged that this word signifies to dip; but this is not its only meaning. The sentence pronounced upon Nebuchadnezzar, was that his body should be "wet (or baptized) with the dew of heaven;" here the word signifies to sprinkle, or moisten by sprinkling, for his body was not wetted by being dipped in dew, but by its falling upon him. In this same sense it is also used by profane authors, such as Homer, Aristo-

phanes, and Aristotle. Hence we conclude that the word *bapto* does not exclusively signify immersion: but that it may signify any kind of wetting, whatever the mode may be, and therefore it is clear that water may be applied in any way in the ordinance of baptism.

If, then, the word was so understood by Jewish writers, in Greek, and by profane authors, we may presume that it retains the same meaning in the New Testament; and that it is unwarrantable to affirm, from the simple use of the term in reference to this ordinance of Christ, that we are bound to administer it only by immersion.

“The Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash,” or baptize themselves, “they eat not. And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing,” or baptisms, “of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables.” Mark vii. 3, 4.

The washing of the hands was performed among the Jews by pouring water upon them, as appears from the express testimony of Scripture: “Elisha, the son of Shaphat, poured water on the hands of Elijah.” 2 Kings iii. 11.

The “baptizing” after their return from market, probably signifies the same thing with washing their hands, as it is very improbable that on every such occasion they washed the whole body; at any rate, if they put themselves to this trouble, the body would be washed in the same manner with the hands, by pouring water upon it. There is no reason to think that this baptism consisted in immersion. Cups and pots, and brazen vessels, may have been “baptized” by being plunged into water; but as the operation could have been performed equally well by pouring water into them, we can draw no certain conclusion respecting the mode; and the words *baptizein* and *baptismos*, convey nothing more than the general idea of washing.

The tables, or, as the word ought to be rendered, “the beds or couches,” on which they reclined at their meals, which it is

said they washed or baptized, were so large as to hold several persons at the same time; and from their size, it seems reasonable to suppose that they were "baptized," not by being immersed in water, but by being washed with the hand, or sprinkled, to remove any real or fancied impurity.

Secondly, that immersion is not essential to the right administration of the ordinance of baptism; but that the ordinance is rightly administered by the application of water in any other way, may be proved from the circumstances attending the baptisms recorded in the Scriptures. John is said to have baptized "in Jordan," and in *Ænon*, near to *Salim* ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῳ; standing no doubt in the water, and successively dipping his disciples. That the preposition ἐν often denotes the place in which any thing is done, cannot be denied; but among its many senses it signifies also at, or nigh to. "Now, in the place—ἐν τοῦ Τοπο—where he was crucified, there was a garden," John xix. 41; not on the identical spot, but in its vicinity. In like manner, *O Purgos en to Soloam*, is "the tower;" not "in the pool of Siloam," John vi. 23, but close by it. As Matthew says that John baptized "in Jordan," the Evangelist John tells us that he was baptizing "beyond Jordan." 1 John i. 28. And as we cannot suppose a contradiction between these statements, we must reconcile them by Matthew's meaning close by Jordan, and the other Evangelist, that the place was on the opposite bank of the river. Besides, although John had actually taken his station in the river, it does not follow that he immersed his disciples; because he might have chosen it for convenience, as the number to be baptized was great, that there might be a sufficient supply of water at hand to pour upon their heads or faces.

The use of the preposition εἰς, ἐκ, ἀπὸ, in reference to baptism, is supposed to furnish an argument in favour of immersion. It is said of Philip and the Eunuch, that they went down into the water, εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ, and that they came out of the water, ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος. Acts viii. 38, 39. But this is no proof of immersion; for if the expression of their going down into the water neces-

sarily includes dipping, then Philip was dipped as well as the Eunuch. The preposition *εις* translated *into*, often signifies no more than to or unto; and the preposition *εκ*, out of.

For instance: When Jesus came — *εις το μνημειον* — to the sepulchre of Lazarus, John ix. 38, we know that he did not enter into it; and when ships came from Tiberias, John vi. 23 — *εκ Τιβεριαδος* — we do not suppose that they sailed out of the midst of the city, but that that was the place from which their voyage commenced. The preposition *εκ*, simply signifies the point from which, and *εις* the point to which, a movement is made.

Jesus is said to come out of the water. The Greek term, *απο*, signifies from; who hath warned you to flee from, not out of the wrath to come; when they were come *out* of the water, Acts viii. 39, ought to be translated *from*. From these remarks, it is evident that there is nothing in the account which we have of John's mode of baptism, that proves immersion to be the only proper mode.

Much stress is laid by the Baptists on the expressions used in two passages of Scripture, as favouring their practice of immersion. You find them in Rom. vi. 4; Col. ii. 12.

In both these passages, we are said to be "buried with Christ in baptism." But their erroneous opinion is founded on a wrong idea of our Saviour's burial. They seem to think that he was buried after the manner of our country, where a dead body may be said to be immersed in the earth, because it is let down into the grave, and covered with mould. But he was not buried in this manner. The sepulchre of Christ was an apartment hewn out of a rock, the floor of which was on a level with the ground, or depressed only a little below the surface, and which was so capacious, that a person could stand or sit upright in it. Here his body was deposited, and covered only with grave-clothes.

What resemblance, then, is there between the plunging of the baptized into water and the burial of Christ? No two things in the world are more unlike. The meaning of the

Apostle, in the passages upon which so much stress is laid, is this: As Christ was buried and rose again to a heavenly life, so we, by baptism, signify that we are cut off from the life of sin, that we may rise again to a new life of faith and love.

It is worthy of remark, that in all the instances of baptism recorded in Scripture, there is not a single instance mentioned of the baptizer, and persons to be baptized, leaving the place where they were, and going to some other, to seek water to be baptized. But in every instance, as soon as they were ready to receive baptism, we find them immediately baptized, whether it was by a river side, on the road, in the city, in a house, or in a prison; and, in no instance, is the particular mode mentioned. Three thousand were baptized, in Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost; but do we hear that they were immersed, or that they were by a stream or pool of water? When Peter baptized Cornelius, and those that were collected in his house, we have every reason to believe that they were baptized in his house, for we do not hear that they went out; and it is not probable that there were conveniences in the house for immersing them. When Paul baptized the Jailer and his household, it is very improbable that he, a prisoner, went out of the precincts of the prison, in the night, to seek a place suitable for immersion, and it is equally improbable that there was a place suitable for it in the prison. Can it, then, be possible that a particular mode, and especially immersion, is essential to the validity of the ordinance of baptism?

Thirdly, that immersion is not essential to the ordinance of baptism, but that it is rightly administered by pouring, sprinkling, or washing, may be further proved from the allusions of Scripture to this ordinance. The things signified by baptism, as has been observed, are the blood of Christ, by which we are cleansed from our sins, and his Spirit, by which we are sanctified. These are frequently represented by sprinkling and pouring. Under the Old Testament dispensation, the blood of Christ, which was to take away sin, was constantly represented by the sprinkling of the blood upon the numerous sacrifices

which were offered. In the Epistle of the Hebrews, the blood of Christ is called "the blood of sprinkling;" Heb. xii. 24; and Peter also speaks of the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ; 1 Pet. i. 2. As, therefore, baptism represents the blood of Christ, spiritually sprinkled on our hearts, for the pardon of sin, it is very properly and expressively performed by sprinkling. The influences of the Spirit, which is the other thing signified by baptism, are also frequently represented by sprinkling and pouring. The Spirit is said to "come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth." Ps. lxxii. 6. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, speaks of having our hearts "sprinkled" from an evil conscience. Heb. x. 22.

The Scriptures frequently speak of baptism with the Holy Ghost; and baptism with water is evidently a sign of baptism with the Holy Ghost. How the apostles were baptized with the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost, we learn from the second chapter of the Acts, where, in one place, it is said, that the Holy Ghost was "poured out," and, in another, "shed down;" and, in Acts x. 44, 45, we read that the gift of the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the Gentiles. From all these passages, it appears that the things signified by baptism are frequently expressed by sprinkling and pouring; and hence we draw the inference, that the sign is properly performed by sprinkling or pouring.

But who are the subjects of baptism? Should it be administered only to adults? or, ought it to be administered also to infants? This is a point of great importance, about which Christians are divided in sentiment. We maintain that children have a right to this ordinance. Children are included in the covenant of God, as well as the adult.

The covenant which God made with Abraham, and which we find recorded in the twelfth chapter of Genesis, was the covenant of grace. Circumcision was the sign and seal of this covenant. This sign and seal was, by divine appointment, put upon infants only eight days old; and therefore infants once had a right to the initiating seal of the covenant of grace, and

had a visible standing in the covenant. Circumcision was abolished, when Christ came, and baptism was instituted in its room, as appears from Colossians ii. 11, 12, and should therefore be applied to the same subjects, unless God has taken away the right which he once gave. The New Testament gives no evidence that God has taken away this right from infants, to be admitted to a visible standing in his Church; but it contains positive evidence that he has continued this right. Christ said; "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Peter urged, as a reason why the Jews should be baptized; "The promise is unto you, and to your children." Paul declared infants to be holy, and entire households were baptized, among which, in all probability, there were some infants.

The arguments for infant baptism are here only briefly stated; but from which the conclusion may confidently be drawn, that children ought to be baptized. For further information on this subject, the reader is referred to Doctor Brownlee's Treatise on Baptism, and Rev. Albert Helffenstein, Jun., on the same subject.

In addition to all these arguments, we have the testimony of the history of the Church, that this was the practice, without dispute, for many hundred years. A number of testimonies might be quoted, from the writings of the Fathers, from Justin Martyr, who lived about the middle of the second century, down to Augustin, who lived in the fifth century, that the baptism of infants was universally held by the Church, from directly after the apostles' days, for many hundred years. And how can we account for this, except we admit, that the primitive Church received it from the apostles?

It is objected, that children ought not to be baptized, because there is no positive command. But is it forbidden? If children are not to be baptized because there is no positive command for it, for the same reason, women should not come to the Lord's Supper; we should not keep the first day of the week, nor attend public worship; for none of these are expressly commanded.

Though there are no express examples, in the New Testament, of Christ and his apostles baptizing infants, yet this is no proof that they were excluded. And, as was mentioned before, that as whole households were baptized by the apostles, no doubt there were infants belonging to them, who were also baptized.

It is objected, that infants do not understand the nature of this ordinance; neither did the children, under the Old Testament, understand the nature of circumcision.

Again, it is objected, that infants cannot profess faith and repentance, and are therefore not proper subjects for baptism. This objection falls with as much weight upon the institution of circumcision, as infant baptism; since they are as capable, or are as fit subjects for the one, as the other.

This objection against infant baptism is more specious than solid. We find everywhere, in the New Testament, that repentance and faith are held up as essential to salvation. On the principle of the objecter, as infants are incapable of exercising repentance and faith, they must be incapable of salvation. The Scriptures say, repent, believe, and be baptized; infants cannot repent and believe, therefore our opponents conclude, they cannot be baptized. This kind of reasoning excludes infants from eternal salvation. For this is the conclusion we must draw from it. The Scriptures say, repent, and believe, and be saved; infants cannot repent and believe, therefore they cannot be saved. If the reasoning be good in the one case, it is good in the other. The argument, if it proves anything, inevitably proves too much.

Baptism is administered, according to the command of our Lord, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This form of administration signifies; first, that we are baptized by the authority of the persons of the Holy Trinity; secondly, it signifies that we are baptized into the faith and profession of the Holy Trinity; and, thirdly, it imports that we are dedicated to the service of those divine Persons; that we are engaged to offer religious worship to them, as separately, and conjunctly,

the proper objects of it, and to yield unreserved and unremitted obedience to their law, as revealed in Scriptures. Baptism may be considered as a federal transaction. On the one hand, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, promise to bestow upon the baptized the blessings of salvation, of which water is a symbol; on the other hand, they come under an engagement "to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded us." Baptism, in the name of the Trinity, is essential to the validity of the ordinance; and it is also essential to its validity, that it be performed by a minister of the Gospel. We have no account, in Scripture, that the ordinance was administered by any others, than those authorized to preach the Gospel.

The advantages of baptism are the following: by baptism a child becomes interested in the promises of the covenant of grace; Gen. xvii. 7, 8; baptism secures the faithfulness of parents, that they will attend to the religious education of their children; it introduces children to the prayers of the church, for they have become, by baptism, members of the visible Church; their religious instruction is thereby secured; and they are brought under the care of the Church, and become the subjects of its wholesome discipline. Although children are insensible of the transaction, and can, therefore, at the time, derive no moral benefit from it, yet reflection upon it, at a subsequent period, may be productive of the happiest effects. At the same time, it is calculated to produce the best effects upon parents. It places their children in a new relation to them, and presents them under a new aspect. In the act of giving their children to God, they engage to bring them up in the fear and nurture of the Lord; they promise to educate them for his service, and to make their souls, still more than their bodies, the objects of their care.

Let parents be faithful in the performance of those duties incumbent upon them; let them often bear their children on their hearts, at the throne of grace, and plead their covenant relation; let them pray with them, and for them; instruct them in the principles of the Christian religion; restrain them from

vice, and set them an example of piety; then they have great encouragement to hope, that, sooner or later, God will pour out his spirit upon their seed, and make them the subjects of his saving grace.

CHAPTER LV.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

THE Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was instituted by our Lord, on a memorable occasion. It was on the evening on which he was betrayed, and after he had eaten the passover with his disciples, that he instituted the sacred supper, to be a memorial of his sufferings, a sign of his presence with his Church, and a seal of the new covenant, which he was the next day to confirm with his blood. An account of it is given by the Evangelists; but the most distinct and complete, is found in one of the Epistles of Paul, to whom it had been communicated by our Saviour himself. You find it recorded, 1 Cor. xi. 23-26. It is evident, from the words of the institution, that it was intended to be a perpetual ordinance. Accordingly, we learn from the Scriptures, that it was observed in the apostolical Church; and we know, that from those days down to the present time, it has been celebrated by his professed disciples, without interruption.

In the primitive Church, the original institution was retained in its simplicity. In process of time, however, highly figurative language began to be used, which, if literally understood, imported a corporeal presence of Christ. It was in the ninth century, that a real change of the substance of the elements, in the Lord's Supper, was first openly and explicitly maintained. The author of this heresy was Pascacius Radbert, abbot of

Corbey, in France. Though this novel opinion met with powerful opposition, from many distinguished persons of the age, yet it obtained powerful patronage; was gradually diffused among the nations of the west; and was finally established as an article of faith in the Church of Rome, under the name of transubstantiation. It received its final sanction from the council of Trent, by the enactment of two decrees, in which the doctrine of the corporeal presence of Christ, in the supper, or transubstantiation, is explicitly maintained and confirmed.

This doctrine is founded upon a literal understanding of the words of the institution; "This is my body." But it is evident, there are many expressions in Scripture, which must be understood figuratively. Thus, Christ is called, a stone, a rock, a way, a door, a vine; but common sense teaches us, that the expression, "This is my body," is not to be understood literally, but figuratively.

Again, the seven good kine, and the seven ill-favoured kine, in Pharaoh's dream, "are seven years;" that is, signify seven years of fertility or barrenness; the ten horns, in Daniel, "are ten kings," or, are emblems of them; the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks are the seven churches" — the stars and the candlesticks being representations of the angels and the churches. The paschal lamb, is called "the Lord's passover," just as our Saviour said of the bread, "this is my body." The passage in John vi. 51-53, has no relation to the Eucharist; it was delivered before the Lord's Supper was instituted; and Christ himself has taught us, that his words must not be understood in a literal, but in a spiritual sense. John vi. 63. The doctrine of transubstantiation receives no support from Scripture; this is no objection against it; but there are several other objections, which fully justify us in rejecting the doctrine. It contradicts the testimony of our senses — is at variance with reason and common sense, and involves the most palpable absurdities.

It has given rise to a number of dangerous errors, such as idolatry, the sacrifice of the mass; mutilation of the sacrament,

and the doctrine of concomitance. Although Luther rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation, yet he adopted an opinion equally unintelligible and unscriptural. He believed, that although the bread and wine are not changed into the body and blood of Christ, yet that his real body and blood are received by the communicants along with the symbols. This is called consubstantiation; but this doctrine is liable to almost all the objections of the former. Zwingli deviated from Luther, on the subject of the Eucharist, and adopted the opinion: "That the bread and wine were no more than a representation of the body and blood of Christ; or, in other words, the signs appointed to denote the benefits that were conferred upon mankind, in consequence of the death of Christ; therefore Christians derived no other fruit from the participation of the Lord's Supper, than a mere commemoration and remembrance of the merits of Christ; and that there was nothing in the ordinance but a memorial of Christ."

It is well known that Calvin was opposed both to the doctrine of transubstantiation and consubstantiation. Yet he was not free from all error on this subject, as will appear from *Calvini Instit. lib. iv, cap. xvii, sec. 10*; in which he has expressed himself in the following manner: "The sum is, that our souls are not otherwise fed with the flesh and blood of Christ, than bread and wine sustains our corporeal life. Nor would the analogy of the sign otherwise agree, unless souls found their nourishment in Christ; which cannot be, unless Christ truly coalesce with us into one, and restore us by the eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood. But although it seems incredible that, the places being so distant, the flesh of Christ should penetrate to us so as to be our food, let us remember how much the secret power of the spirit exceeds our senses, and how foolish it is to measure his immensity by our standard. What our mind does not comprehend, let faith conceive, that the spirit truly unites things which are disjoined, in place. That sacred communication of his flesh and blood, by which Christ transfuses his life into us, no otherwise than if he pene-

trated into our bones and marrow, he attests and seals in the Supper; not, indeed, in a vain and empty sign, but there exerting the efficacy of his Spirit, by which he fulfils what he promises."

In opposition to all these errors, we believe that Christ is not corporally present in this ordinance, nor received in a corporal manner; but, nevertheless, that he is spiritually present, and that the worthy receivers do by faith feed upon his body and blood, or receive and apply the benefits of his broken body and shed blood, for their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

The external elements in the Lord's Supper, are bread and wine. The bread signifies his body, and the wine his blood. The breaking of the bread signifies the astonishing sufferings of his body, and the pouring out of the wine, the shedding of his blood. After giving thanks, our Saviour broke the bread, and gave it to his disciples, signifying that he and his Father freely and irrevocably give the blessings of redemption to believers. His disciples received it; thereby declaring their belief in, and acceptance of, the Gospel covenant.

The design of this ordinance, for which it was instituted, was to be a memorial of Christ, or a standing evidence in the world of his sufferings and death until his second coming.

It was instituted to be a seal of the covenant of grace. This design of the ordinance is taught in the words of the institution. "This cup is the New Testament in my blood." That is, it is a sign and seal of the New Testament, or covenant of grace.

It was designed as a public testimony of our communion with Christ.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? By eating and drinking at the Lord's Supper, we are united to Christ; and, as it were, incorporated into him, he dwells in us, and we in him; we are members of his body, and of his flesh and bones. As the members of the body are nourished by wholesome food, so

are the graces of the spirit, faith, joy, and peace, improved and strengthened by this spiritual past.

Another design of the institution was to excite our thankfulness; and,

Finally, it was designed as a public declaration of our Christian love, and communion with the saints. "And we being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.

Great are the advantages resulting from a worthy participation of the Lord's Supper. For it is the means of strengthening our faith, of confirming our hope, of inflaming our love, and of uniting Christ's disciples in Christian love and fellowship.

That the followers of the Redeemer are in duty bound to approach the table of the Lord, no one can doubt. It is the command of Christ, to commemorate his sufferings and his death in this manner. We are obligated to comply with this ordinance, because of our baptismal vow; because the neglect of this duty is a sin of ingratitude, and represented in the Scriptures as a great sin.

But who are the subjects entitled to this privilege? I answer, All those who believe in the atonement, and adorn their profession with a suitable conduct and behaviour. Infidels, who do not believe the Gospel, and persons of immoral and profane lives, have no right to the table of the Lord; but all who believe and obey the Gospel are invited, and will be graciously accepted.

Hence, it is the duty of all those who desire to approach the table of the Lord, to examine themselves; they ought to examine themselves as to their knowledge, their faith, their repentance, their love, and their new obedience.

The answer of the Heidelberg Catechism, as it regards the subject of this ordinance, expresses itself in very correct and proper terms. In the eighty-first question it is asked: "For whom is the Lord's Supper instituted?" The answer is:

"For those who are truly sorry for their sins, and yet trust that these are forgiven them for Christ's sake; and that their

remaining infirmities are covered by his passion and death; and who also earnestly desire to have their faith more and more strengthened, and their lives more holy; but hypocrites, and such as turn not to God with sincere hearts, eat and drink judgment to themselves."

The duty of self-examination is indescribably necessary. The danger of unworthily communicating, is pointed out by the Apostle, and in the Catechism, in language sufficient to make us diligently examine ourselves, and be very careful how we approach the holy ordinance. "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." The word here translated "damnation," signifies judgment and condemnation. It means nothing more than the judgment or condemnation merited by every sin, and which may be averted by repentance. It does not import, as some tender consciences have supposed, that the sin of unworthily communicating is unpardonable, and that persons thereby seal their damnation.

By the damnation or judgment of which the Apostle speaks, we have reason to believe he meant temporal judgments; for he immediately added, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep;" which is generally understood to mean that the Lord had sent sickness and mortality among the Corinthians, for their profanation of the Lord's Supper. And further, in a following verse, we read: "When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." By which is evidently meant, that these temporal judgments were sent upon them by the Lord, to bring them to repentance, that they might not be finally condemned, but saved.

Although the sin of unworthily receiving the Lord's Supper is not unpardonable, it is a great sin, and will issue in our final condemnation, unless repented of.

We ought, therefore, carefully to examine ourselves, that we may not be guilty of this sin, or come under condemnation.

But if we have examined ourselves, and find that we have

evidences that we are Christians, then let us approach the table in humility, and with grateful hearts, in memory of the dying love of Christ our Saviour, and for the purpose of having our faith strengthened, our hope confirmed, our love inflamed, and of manifesting our love and fellowship with the people of God.

May the Lord strengthen to come, all whom he invites to this ordinance!

CHAPTER LVI.

ON THE FINAL STATE OF MEN.—THE DEATH AND IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

MAN consists of two parts—of soul and body. God, when he created man, formed him of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. Had he continued in his primitive integrity, the union of his soul and body had never been dissolved; the power of God, which at first formed him, would have maintained him in a state of immortality. But by his apostasy from God, he became mortal, and the sentence denounced by his Judge, now is, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” A law of mortality is now passed on all men, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. But why, it may be asked, are not the righteous exempted from this law of mortality? For the righteous, an atonement has been made, by which their guilt was expiated, and the curse removed.

How, then, comes it to pass that they are subject to death, as the penalty of sin? In answer to this question, it has been said that the design why the sentence of temporal death is not revoked, is to inspire them with abhorrence of sin, which is followed by such fatal consequences; to keep them humble;

and to give them an opportunity to display their faith, and patience, and hope. Without inquiring whether these purposes are sufficient to account for the fact, we would remark that it is the will of God that we should walk by faith, and not by sight; or that faith should be our guide in the pilgrimage of life. But this design would be frustrated, were the righteous exempted from temporal death, and God to give an open and regular declaration in favour of the good, and against the bad. Were it known in any other way than by the testimony of Scripture, the province of faith would be greatly circumscribed, and we should then see, what we are now called to believe. Were the righteous excluded from temporal death, it would be known to all who they are, and that their piety was recompensed, when they were openly translated to heaven. No person could have doubted of a future state, when he saw his acquaintances and relatives removed to it; or have called in question the truth and advantages of religion, when he himself was a witness of the fulfilment of its promises. Hence we see the reason why God has admitted the temporal death of those interested in the atonement of his Son.

In the forty-second Question of the Catechism, it is asked: Since Christ died for us, why must we also die? The answer is: "Our death is not a satisfaction for our sins, but only an abolishing of sin, and a passage into eternal life." All men, then, are subject to death, the righteous as well as the wicked; the body must return to dust; but it is not so with respect to the soul. The soul is immortal, and will survive the body, and live for ever. Let us attend to the arguments by which the immortality of the soul is proved.

The first argument for the immortality of the soul, is founded on its immateriality. The soul is a simple, uncompounded, and immaterial substance, and not composed of parts, as the body is. Matter cannot think; for if thought essentially belonged to matter, every part of it would think. It seems to be as contrary to reason, to suppose matter to be capable of thought, as to suppose spirit to be made capable of figure and division.

If, then, matter cannot think, we are necessarily led to the conclusion, that, where the power of thinking exists, there is a substance different from matter, in which it inheres, or, in other words, a soul; and as the soul is an immaterial substance, which does not consist of parts, it cannot be subject to dissolution; and hence we infer that the soul is immortal.

The second argument for the immortality of the soul, is founded on its powers. The powers of the soul are superior to the powers of all the other inhabitants of the world. The soul not only perceives what is present, and recollects what is past, but extends its views into the future. It ascends and takes a view of, and contemplates the phenomena, of nature, in the remote regions of the universe, and discovers the laws by which other worlds are governed; or, it descends and explores the hidden secrets of nature. By a process of reasoning, it arrives from the effect to the cause, and thus infers the existence of that Being, who is invisible, and is only seen, by the reflection of his glory, in his works. By the exercises of the faculties of the soul, man learns the relations in which he stands to that Being, and fellow-men—the duties incumbent upon him arising from these relations; and feels that he was made for a nobler purpose than the lower animals, who are ignorant of these things, and have no guide but their senses and instincts. Can it be possible that these high powers were conferred upon him for a temporary use, and during his abode in the world? If the soul is not immortal, then the knowledge of religious and moral truths of his Maker, and his duty, are useless; the consequences of that knowledge will then never be experienced beyond the grave.

We would further observe, that the powers of the soul are capable of improvement; while those of the lower animals are stationary.

The faculties of man are gradually unfolded, from infancy to manhood, and, in some cases, continue vigorous and active to old age. Yet we can never say, that they have arrived to perfection, or that man has attained all the knowledge of which

he is capable. From the wisdom of God, we infer, that he has made nothing in vain; but that all his works will answer the end for which he made them. But the faculties of the soul never, in this life, reach the end for which they evidently seem to be designed by their Creator. If the soul is not immortal, then these faculties would never attain the end for which they were designed, and thus the design of the Creator be defeated; which conclusion is inconsistent with the wisdom of God. Hence it is concluded that the soul will survive the body, and act in another state of existence, where its faculties will reach that end to which they appear to be designed, and advance in knowledge, and in an interminable career of improvement.

The third argument for the immortality of the soul, is founded upon the dictates of conscience. The office of conscience, is to judge of right and wrong, and to acquit or condemn us according to our conduct; to summon us to the higher tribunal of our Maker, and to anticipate the consequences of his sentence in another state of existence. These anticipations of conscience, which are common to all men, are an evidence that the soul will pass into another state, where those anticipations will be realized. It is objected, that conscience is the effect of education; that it is not uniform in its dictates, but commands or prohibits, according to the notions of morality which prevail in a particular country. But, in answer to this objection, we say, that conscience is liable to be perverted, as well as the understanding; it may err, and call virtue, vice; and vice, virtue; but still it exists, amidst all the errors into which it has been betrayed. This is a proof that it is natural to the mind, and that it was implanted in our bosom by the hand of our Creator. The operations of conscience, remind us that this is only the first, and probationary state of our being; that the consequences of our moral actions will not be limited to our present state, but that, when our course is finished, a retribution will follow; and hence we conclude, that the soul is immortal.

A fourth argument, to prove the immortality of the soul, is

the unequal distribution of good and evil, in the present life. God is the moral Governor of the world. He has given a law to the human race, and announced his intention to reward obedience, and punish disobedience; yet we find that there is no regular distribution of rewards and punishments; that sometimes the righteous are afflicted, and the wicked prosper. If we believe that there is a God, and that he is just and good, we must conclude that this life is not the whole of man. We must believe that it is only a state of trial and discipline; and that his treatment according to his desert, is deferred until he has finished his course. We must believe, that, after death, is the judgment, when he shall receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or evil. But this belief implies the immortality of the soul. It may be objected, that there is always an inward satisfaction accompanying the practice of virtue, as its reward, and uneasiness is the consequence of vice, as its punishment. But if there is no future state of existence, this pleasure and pain would be greatly diminished, or annihilated. Many a wicked man would feel no uneasiness, if he were freed from the forebodings of conscience; and, in many cases, the pleasure arising from virtuous actions, would not counterbalance the privations with which they are accompanied.

A fifth argument for the immortality of the soul, is the innate desire of immortality, which is common to all mankind. This desire, it is said, is natural, and must be derived from God, the Author of our nature; and that God would not implant such desires only to deceive us, and not to be realized. It is, however, questionable, whether this argument possesses much solidity. This desire does not appear to be different from the love of life, which is common to us and the inferior animals. It is simply a desire that we may not be deprived of life; which, we may say, is felt by every living creature.

The sixth, and last argument, is derived from the universal belief of all nations, of both civilized and barbarous nations, of both the illiterate and the philosopher. This universal senti-

ment is either implanted in human nature ; or it was derived from revelation before the dispersion of mankind, and was handed down by tradition. If it be natural, it will therefore be universal ; and if the universality of the belief of the immortality of the soul be owing to this cause, it must be derived from the Author of our nature, who is a God of truth, and consequently the doctrine must be true ; and if it be derived from tradition, this tradition must have originated from early revelation ; and if it is a revelation from God, it must be true.

The evidences of human reason, in favour of the immortality of the soul, have their use ; but they are not adapted to the comprehension of all. Neither can they, considered separate from Divine revelation, impart a sure hope and confidence. There are many passages and instances in the Scriptures which prove this doctrine. It is proved from Ex. iii. 6 ; Matt. xxii. 32 ; Eccl. xii. 7 ; Matt. x. 26 ; Luke xvi. ; xxiii. 43 ; Phil. i. 21 ; John iii. 16, 36 ; x. 28 ; xi. 25, 26 ; 2 Cor. iv. 17 ; v. 1 ; Matt. xxv. 46 ; Mark ix. 44.

But the surest proof, is the doctrine and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ has brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel. He has removed all doubt and uncertainty as it respects this doctrine ; he has taught not only that the soul is immortal, and would not perish with the body, but that the future state of existence is eternal. He has taught and maintained the immortality of the soul with such plain and uncontrovertible evidences as are adapted to the meanest capacity, and may easily be comprehended by the illiterate as well as the learned.

For this purpose, he raised several persons from the dead, and arose himself on the third day, and ascended in a visible manner into heaven. What stronger proof could we wish for, than the resurrection of Christ ? If it can be proved that Christ arose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, then it follows, beyond all possibility of doubt, that the soul is immortal.

We have proved that the soul is immortal ; but let us inquire

what is the state of the soul immediately after death. There are different theories on this subject, more or less remote from the truth; but all concurring in this general position, that the disembodied spirit does not immediately pass into its ultimate abode. The first theory is founded upon the terms used in Scripture to express the state of the soul subsequent to temporal death.

These terms are, *hades*, which corresponds with the Hebrew word *scheol*, which signifies the invisible state, and is understood to be the general name of the region into which human beings pass on leaving the body.

It is supposed that this place consists of two provinces, separated from each other by a great gulf, or wide interval; the one the receptacle of the righteous, and the other the receptacle of the wicked. While in these receptacles, they are in an intermediate state; for when the final judgment takes place, the righteous will enter into *ouranos*, or heaven, and the wicked into *geenna*, or hell.

It is supposed, according to this theory, that the souls of men possess consciousness and activity in this intermediate state, and experience happiness or misery; that they are not as happy or miserable as they will be in heaven or in hell, after they have been reunited to their respective bodies, and sentence has been pronounced upon them, at the final judgment. This hypothesis of an intermediate state, although it were satisfactorily established, would be no real accession to our knowledge; and however the reasoning in its favour may be, it does not appear to be irreconcilable to the passages which represent believers, when they die, as entering into heaven, and into the place where Christ is.

The other opinion is, that the soul sleeps after death until the resurrection; but this theory is opposed to various passages of Scripture.

That the soul does not sleep after death, is evident from the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, recorded in Luke xvi.; from our Lord's promise to the penitent thief, Luke xxiii. 43;

from the prayer of Stephen, which he uttered when dying, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit," Acts vii. 59; and from many other passages, as 2 Cor. v. 6-8; Phil. i. 21-23.

The last hypothesis respecting the state of departed souls, is the doctrine of the church of Rome, that the saints do not immediately pass into glory, but first go into a place of purgatory, where they are purified by fire from the stains of sin which had not been washed out during the present life.

The two principal passages to which the church of Rome appeals in support of this doctrine, is the one concerning the sin against the Holy Ghost, that it shall not be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the world to come. Matt. xii. 32. The other is in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, iii. 13-15. But neither of these passages prove the doctrine of purgatory. No mention is made of it in the Scriptures. The Scriptures teach us that the present life is the only season of probation, and that death will unalterably fix the state of every man for ever.

Let us be thankful for the Gospel, by which the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is placed beyond doubt. And let us improve our probationary state, that we may be found prepared after death to enter into glory, and be with Christ. And if prepared, let us rejoice in the immortality of the soul, and the prospects of future happiness.

CHAPTER LVII.

ON THE RESURRECTION.

IN the preceding Chapter, we considered the immortality of the soul, and the arguments in favour of its future state of existence. We shall proceed to consider the resurrection of the dead.

By the resurrection of the dead, we understand the rising

again of the self-same body which was laid in the grave, to be animated with the soul, so that every individual after the resurrection will be the same person, substantially, as before death; though in form and appearance he may be greatly altered.

The resurrection of the dead is a doctrine purely of revelation, and which the unaided light of nature or reason could never have discovered, and of which the natural world can furnish only some images or similitudes. One of the most common analogies in the natural world, by which the subject has been illustrated, is the revival of all things at the return of spring. Trees and shrubs, and herbs and flowers, which seem to be dead, and some of which lay hidden in the earth like the body in the grave, burst forth with new life, and delight our senses with their verdure and their fragrance. But the analogy fails in the most important point. They were not dead; there was merely a suspension of their future functions; but from the body in the grave, the vital principle has totally departed, and its very texture is dissolved. To make the similitude complete, we should see an instance of the reviviscence of a plant, torn from its bed, deprived of its roots, reduced to ashes by fire, or consumed by air and moisture. On such a plant, spring would shed its genial influence in vain.

The resurrection of the dead is, then, a pure doctrine of Divine revelation.

It is so clearly taught in the New Testament, by the instances of dead persons being restored to life, by the resurrection of our Lord himself, and by numerous passages which expressly affirm the doctrine, that it is unnecessary to refer to particular passages; I shall therefore mention only a few from the Old Testament, to show that it was known before the advent of our Saviour.

A strange notion has been broached, that the Jews were ignorant of a future state, because there is no express mention of it in the law of Moses. But our Lord has proved it, and the resurrection of the body, from the words of God prior to the giving of the law: "I am the God of Abraham, and the

God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," Matt. xxii. 32; and we see that it is plainly foretold in their subsequent sacred books. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is affirmed that it was the hope of it which supported the martyrs of the Jewish religion. Heb. xi. 35. This doctrine is again taught in the following passages: in Job xix. 25, 26, 27, and in the Book of Daniel, xii. 2.

Reason confirms the dictates of revelation by reminding us, that the power of God is able to execute the purposes of his will. As the doctrine does not imply a contradiction, it is possible, and may therefore be effected by that power which is unlimited. And as he fashioned the human body out of the dust, it would be absurd to suppose that there is any greater difficulty in raising it from the dust again.

A question is asked, whether the dead will be raised with the same bodies which were laid in the grave, or with different bodies. That the same body which was laid in the grave, shall be raised, is necessarily implied in the very nature of a resurrection. If it were a different body, composed of different particles of matter, it would be a creation, and not a resurrection. But it has been asked again, whether the body that died, or the body at any former period, as it is known to be in a perpetual flux, and few of the particles which belonged to it in youth, remain in old age; it has been asked, whether, as all those particles equally belong to the same individual, they are all to be restored to him, or only a part, and what part?

Although we cannot give a satisfactory answer to such questions, our ignorance is not a reason why we should entertain any doubt of the identity of the body. If we are assured of the fact, we should be content. By the sameness or identity of the human body at the resurrection, we do not suppose that the same atoms or particles which compose our present bodies, will form those at the resurrection; nor are we to suppose that the constitution, arrangement, or qualities of our bodies will be the same then as they now are. Let us attend to what the apostle Paul says on this subject. 1 Cor. xv. 37, 38. "That

which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat; or some other grain. But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body." The meaning of the apostle, in these words, may be easily understood, if we reflect upon his design, which was to show that the bodies of the saints will undergo a great and glorious change, and will not be the same as they now are, in respect to their qualities, as the plant which rises from the earth is different from the bare grain. It is a physical fact, that the plant is not different from the seed, as the new bodies are supposed to be from the old; for, it is derived from the seed, and contains a part of its substance. The apostle himself proceeds upon this idea, when he says; "thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die"—36; plainly supposing that that which is quickened is the same in substance which died; and hence that the body of the saints, at the resurrection, is the same body which underwent putrefaction. The apostle afterwards contrasts the present and future state of the body, and assumes it as a fact, that it is the same material substance, which is now corruptible, mean and weak, but is afterwards to be incorruptible, glorious and powerful; this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality.

Against the resurrection of the same body, it is objected, that the bodies of men often enter into the composition of other substances; that they not only serve for the nutrition of vegetables, and are the food of carnivorous animals, but that they are, occasionally, devoured by cannibals, and converted into a part of their bodies. Two things are supposed, in this objection; first, that all the particles which have ever belonged to an individual, will be united in the composition of his future body; and secondly, that a part of the substance of one man, may become part of the substance of another. If the first proposition is true, the second is false; and if the second is true, the first is false. The objection is addressed to our ignorance; and the objectors are equally ignorant, and have, therefore, no right to make the objection; nor are we obligated to answer it.

Some have supposed that there existed in human bodies a secret germ, stamen or seed, which is, in its nature, incorruptible and imperishable, and that from it would be formed those bodies, which, at the resurrection, we would possess. This opinion implies that the body is not entirely dead; and that there is a part of it, however small, in which life remains; for a dead germ or seed could not reproduce; and how can there be life in any particle of the body after the vital principle has forsaken it? Is the human body a vegetable? Does it resemble a plant, which, when its leaves and stem are destroyed, retains life in the root, and will shoot forth again at the return of spring? And how is this germ or seminal principle preserved, when the body is reduced to ashes by fire, or undergoes a complete dissolution in the grave? The resurrection of the dead will be universal, and will extend to all, of every nation, and of every age, whether good or bad.

The wicked shall be raised, and afterwards judged and cast into hell; but the righteous shall be raised to enjoy eternal life. Christ, as their head and representative, rose on the third day, and now lives for evermore; as the head lives, so shall the members also live. "I live, and ye shall also live."

Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. He was the first, in order of time; and he was the first in respect of time. So he was the first in order of succession; all the saints follow him, as the harvest followed the representation of the first fruits of the temple. The apostle Paul makes the resurrection of Christ the foundation of the resurrection of the saints. "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching in vain, and your faith is also vain." But now Christ is risen from the dead, and by virtue and power of his resurrection shall all his followers be raised from the grave.

With regard to the nature of that change which the bodies of the saints shall experience at the resurrection, the Apostle informs us that they shall be raised, incorruptible, glorious,

powerful, and spiritual. Cor. xv. Their bodies shall be raised incorruptible; and, again, this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality. One of the most striking characteristics of the human body, in its present state, is its tendency to decay. This tendency manifests itself, and often fatally, in every stage or period of its existence; but especially when it has passed the middle point of life. Then decay arrests it in a thousand forms, and with irresistible power; the limbs gradually stiffen, the faculties lose their vigour, the strength fails, the face becomes overspread with wrinkles, and the head with the locks of age. Health by degrees recedes from the firmest constitution, pains multiply, feebleness and languor lay hold of the whole system, and death seizes the frame as its prey, and changes it into corruption and dust. But in this respect the bodies of the saints shall undergo a change; they shall be raised incorruptible and immortal, no longer liable to decay, but firm and unassailable by the inroads of disease, pain, or death.

They shall be raised in glory. It is sown in dishonour, it shall be raised in glory, and be fashioned like unto the glorious body of the Redeemer. Phil. iii. 21. The glorified body of Christ will be the model after which the bodies of the saints will be fashioned; and we know that when Christ appeared to the three apostles, on the mount of transfiguration, in his glorified body, "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment became white and glistening." The bodies of the saints, freed from every deformity and decrepitude to which they were subject in this present sinful state, will then appear arrayed in all the vigour of bloom and perpetual youth; a sweet and heavenly lustre will beam from their countenances; their faces, like that of the martyr Stephen, will resemble the faces of angels; and a glory inexpressible, and suited to their high and exalted condition, will surround their forms.

They shall be raised in power. "It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power." It will be endowed with strength, enabling it, without weariness, fatigue, or languor, to engage in

those employments peculiar to the heavenly state, which consist in continually doing the will of God, and unceasingly celebrating his praises. It will be possessed of power to receive, without being overwhelmed, the dazzling and effulgent splendour which beams from the throne of God, and to bear up under that exceeding and eternal weight of glory which will be conferred upon it.

The bodies of the saints will be raised spiritual. "It is sown a natural body, and is raised a spiritual body." Of spiritual bodies, we know little or nothing; because they are not, in our present state, the subject of our knowledge. But from the apostle's opposing them to natural or animal bodies, we may safely infer that they will greatly differ from them in many and important respects. They will be spiritual or refined bodies, not composed of flesh and blood. They will be possessed of powers and faculties; for action and enjoyment of which, we can now form no conception. On the wings of the wind, they will be enabled with astonishing rapidity to move from place to place. Unlike the carnal bodies which we now possess, instead of being a hindrance or clog to the operations of the soul, they will acknowledge a complete and entire subjection to its control.

With regard to those who, at the resurrection day, shall be found alive, Paul informs us that they shall be changed. 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. The bodies of those who are found alive when Christ comes, will be as unfit for the heavenly state, as the bodies lying in the grave, and will therefore undergo the same change; with this difference only, that there will be no recomposition, but a sudden transformation of them. They will, perhaps, undergo a similar change with the bodies of Enoch and Elijah, when they were translated into heaven. This will happen in a moment. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." 52.

The doctrine of the resurrection is to the believer a source

of the most abundant consolation. But it speaks terror to the wicked. It reminds us of the necessity of immediately seeking an interest in the redemption of Christ.

CHAPTER LVIII.

JUDGMENT.

THE general resurrection of the dead will be an event most solemn and important; but it will be only the beginning of the grand and awful solemnities of that great day that will follow, when we must all be judged according to the deeds done in the body.

The doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments, is evident from reason, or from the relation in which men stand to God as their Creator. As God is the Creator of men, he has a right to give, and govern them by certain laws, either written or unwritten, and to call them to an account for the violation of the law, so that whether they have sinned with, or without the law, they shall be judged accordingly. Hence the Heathens, who are destitute of Divine revelation, and who have had only the light of nature to guide them, have entertained, in some form or other, notions of a future judgment; or have manifested a disposition to receive and embrace the doctrine. When Paul preached to the wise philosophers of Athens concerning the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others, more serious, said they would hear him again; but when he spoke to them of God's judging the world in righteousness, they did not in the least contradict him, or make any objection.

The judgment to come, is evident from the justice of God—that attribute of the Divine nature, whereby he will render unto every man his just due. The justice of God is not fully

displayed in the dispensation of things in the present state. Good men are often afflicted and persecuted, while sinners who give reins to their appetites and passions, often prosper, and pass their days amidst affluence, and a succession of delights. Many crimes are secret—unknown to all but the guilty; and of public crimes, the authors are not always discovered, or in some way or other escape the hands of justice. Hence we conclude, since justice is not at present fully displayed in this life, another dispensation will follow, under which there will be an exact retribution; that the time will come when the righteous will be rewarded, and transgressors punished; when every work shall be brought into judgment, and every secret thing shall be revealed.

The doctrine of a future judgment is further apparent from the accusations of conscience. Conscience is the judgment which a man passes on his actions, whether they be good or evil. What is the cause that the thoughts of man accuse him, and that he feels an inward dread and fear in the act of sinning; and whence that inward joy, and peace of mind, the good man feels, and that always accompany the practice of virtue? Do they not proceed from the dictates of conscience, which testify and call aloud, that men are accountable beings, and that the time is coming, when every one will receive his just due, according to the deeds done in the body?

The Holy Scriptures put the doctrine of a future judgment beyond all doubt. Not to multiply passages, I shall refer only to a few. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied concerning this day; "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all." Solomon hath declared, "that God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil." Our blessed Lord hath also said, that "the hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and go forth from their graves, to be judged." Paul says, that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, that every one may receive his reward, according to the deeds done in the body."

The doctrine being established, let us inquire who will be the judge? The Scriptures inform us, that God will judge the world; but Christ himself hath told us, John v. 22, "The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Hence we learn that God the Son will execute the office of judge of the world. This is clearly taught in the following passages of Holy Writ: Acts x. 42, xvii. 31; 2 Cor. v. 10; Rom. ii. 16; 2 Tim. iv. 1.

The manner of his appearance, will be such as becomes the dignity of his person and office. "The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, and he shall sit upon the throne of his glory." Matt. xxv. 31. "He shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." Luke ix. 26. "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Matt. xxvi. 64. "The Lord himself," saith Paul, 1 Thess. iv. 16, "shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire." "And I saw," saith John, Rev. xx. 11, "a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth, and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them." Such is the description given of the appearance of the Judge, in that great day. How different this appearance from that which he once made unto men! when he was seen in the form of a servant! when he lay an infant in the manger of Bethlehem! when he stood before the judgment bar of Pilate! and when he hung as a malefactor upon the cross!

As to the place where the judgment will be held, we can say but little. The Scriptures seem to intimate that the extensive region of the air will be the place of judgment. For the apostle informs us, that the saints "shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." 1 Thess. iv. 17.

Before the throne of judgment, wherever it may be set, shall be gathered together that innumerable multitude, which are to

be tried, in that great day. The persons to be tried, are angels and men. That the fallen angels will be included, is evident from Jude, the 6th verse; "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." With these must be assembled all the children of men, from Adam, the first man, down to the very last one of his numerous posterity.

The first act of the Judge, as far as we know, will be the division of this vast assembly into two parts. Matt. xxv. 32, 33. What a solemn separation! and what strange discoveries will this separation make!

The rule or law which will be the standard of judgment, will be that portion of the will of God, and their duty, which the persons on trial knew, or might have known. The Heathen will be judged by the rule of the law of nature. "As many," saith Paul, "as have sinned without law," that is, without the revealed law, "shall also perish without law," Rom. ii. 12, that is, without that aggravated punishment which awaits those who perish from under the revealed Word of God.

Those who have enjoyed the revealed Word of God, will, in addition to the rule of the law of nature, be judged according to this rule; "As many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." Rom. ii. 12. The Jews who lived under the old dispensation, will have to give an account of their improvement of the light afforded them under that dispensation; and they who have lived under the New Testament dispensation, will have to give an account of their improvement of all their additional light and motives afforded them. How great will be the account which those will have to render who live under the Gospel! They will not only, with the Heathen, have to give an account of their improvement of the light of nature, which they enjoyed equally with them; and with the Jews of their improvement of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which they enjoyed in common with them; but in addition to these, of their improvement of the light of the Gospel!

The saints will be judged out of the Book of Life, which some understand to be the decree of God, appointing them to salvation; but it seems rather to be the Gospel, or the law of faith, which says; "He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." On comparing their exercise and conduct with this law, it will be found that they are believers, and consequently that they have a claim to the glorious recompense promised to faith. If it be asked for what men will be judged? the Scriptures plainly answer this question, and teach us that we must give an account for every thing that we have done; Eccl. xii. 14; for every idle word that men shall speak; Matt. xii. 36; for every work, whether good or evil, even for every secret thing, which will embrace the thoughts of our heart, our desires, and every exercise of our souls, as well as those actions which are concealed from the world. For all these things we must give an account in the day of judgment.

Again, it may be asked, whether the sins of the saints will, in that day, be published? Some suppose they will not, as they are all forgiven in Christ; and as the Scriptures represent them as blotted out, covered, cast into the depths of the sea, and remembered no more. Others suppose they will be published, in order to manifest, before the assembled universe, the glory of that grace which has pardoned them. This much we know, and is certain, that the sins of the saints will not be alleged against them to their condemnation, neither will they be published to their disgrace or confusion.

And now we have come to the grand crisis upon which the eternal states of all mankind turn — I mean the great decisive sentence. The sentence will extend to those on the right, and left hand of the Judge, and will be sufficient to convince all in the immense assembly, that the sentence pronounced upon each individual will be just. There will be no need of witnesses, as in human courts, because the Judge is omniscient, and unerring in his decisions. There will be a testimony to their rectitude, as it respects himself, in the bosom of every man. All his past

actions will be recalled, and, with all their circumstances, pass before his mind in rapid succession; his conscience will then be faithful, and it will re-echo the voice of the Judge, and draw from every tongue an acknowledgment that he is "a God of knowledge, by whom actions are weighed."

When the investigation is finished, and every man is prepared to hear his doom, the Judge will say to those on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" and to those on his left; "Depart from me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matt. xxv. 34, 41. Then the wicked will go away into everlasting punishment, while the saints who witness this awful display of justice and wrath, shall enter the mansions of glory: "They shall go into life eternal."

And now eternity will commence. The earth, on which men were appointed to act the preparatory part, will pass away, or be changed. This chosen theatre of the moral administration of God towards the human race, seems no longer to be wanted, when all his designs are accomplished. 2 Pet. iii. 10. "Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." 2 Pet. iii. 11.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE FINAL STATE OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND
THE WICKED.

WE have, in the foregoing Chapter, attended to the solemn transactions of the judgment-day, and to the different sentences which will be pronounced upon the righteous and the wicked. From the description given by our Lord, in the 25th chapter of Matthew, of the proceedings of the judgment-day, it appears, that sentence will first be pronounced upon the righteous; but that the sentence pronounced upon the wicked, will be first executed. To treat of the punishment of the wicked, will, therefore, be the first in order.

The future punishment of the wicked may be divided in those of loss, and those of sense.

The wicked shall suffer the loss of all good. They shall be separated from God, and the enjoyment of God, the source of eternal felicity; they shall be shut out, and excluded from heaven, the place of happiness, and from the society of all happy beings, that surround the throne of God, and from all hope of redemption.

The future misery of the wicked will consist not only in a punishment of loss; but also of sense. They shall not only be deprived of all good, but shall also endure positive misery, accompanied with a sense or feeling of the most dreadful torments.

The place where the wicked shall be punished, is represented, in the Scriptures, under a variety of figures, expressive of its awfulness. It is called a "prison;" 1 Pet. iii. 19; "the bottomless pit;" Rev. xx. 1; "a furnace of fire;" Rev. xiii. 42; "a lake burning with brimstone;" Rev. xix. 20; "hell;" Luke xvi. 23; and "outer darkness;" Matt. viii. 12. The misery of the wicked, in this place, is described, in Scripture, in the strongest

terms, and by the most dreadful figures. It is called, "the second death." Rev. It is represented by "darkness;" Matt. xxii. 3; by "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth;" Matt. viii. 12, xiii. 42. In Isaiah, 66th chapter 24th verse, the torments of the wicked are represented by the gnawing of worms, and the burning of fire; "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." The metaphor of a worm represents the inward torments, and vexing passions which shall arise in the souls of those unhappy creatures, who are the just objects of this punishment. When an impenitent sinner is cast into hell, we have reason to suppose that the evil temper of his soul, and the vicious principles within him, are not abated; but his natural powers, and the vices which have corrupted them, are awakened, and exercised under the sensations of his dreadful punishment. Sinners will, therefore, feel a remorse of conscience, of which they shall never be relieved. All their crimes shall then rise up, and stand for ever before their eyes, in all their glaring forms, and all their heinous, aggravated circumstances. These will rest upon their spirits, with teasing an eternal vexation.

Connected with this remorse, and anguish of conscience, there will be an overwhelming sense of an angry God, and an utter despair of his love, which is lost for ever.

The nature of hell's torments is represented not only by the worm that never dieth, but also by the fire that "shall never be quenched." Fire, when applied to the sensible and tender parts of the flesh, causes the most violent pains, of any thing we know; and it is used to signify the punishment of the damned, and the wrath of God, in the world to come; and it is very probable, that the passage we find written, Isaiah xxx., last verse, is the foundation of it. "Tophet is ordained of old; he has made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire, and much wood; and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." This "Tophet" was a place in the valley of Hinnom, where the Children of Israel burnt in sacrifice to the idol Moloch; and from these Hebrew words, hell, in the

New Testament, is called *geenna*, because of the burning torture and the terrible shrieks of dying children in this valley of Hin-nom. This description of hell, by fire, is used by our Saviour and his apostles, in their writings. Christ will say to impenitent sinners; "depart;" and Paul, speaking of Christ's second coming, declares that he shall appear "in flaming fire;" and in the Revelations, the final punishment of sinners is represented by fire and brimstone, as the instruments of their torment. It is true, spirits, or beings which have no body, cannot feel burning by fire, unless they are united to some sort of material vehicles. It is, therefore, the opinion of some, that there will be no material fire to torment the damned, but that the term must be taken in a figurative sense. Others suppose, that it is not improbable, that the fire of hell will be a material fire. Since the bodies of the lost are to be raised again, they may be made immortal, to endure the torture without consuming. As God, by his almighty power, preserved the bodies of three men in the burning furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, so that the fire had no power to destroy them, they think that God can, by that same power, do the same thing, under the influence of his justice, as well as of his mercy. This much is certain, that the Scriptures frequently make use of fire, brimstone, burning, smoke, darkness, and chains, and everything that is painful, in order to represent the miseries that are prepared for the wicked in hell, and which metaphors, undoubtedly, intimate a sense of most intense pain and anguish, with which God will afflict those guilty sinners, in the regions of woe and misery.

The society of the wicked, in hell, will greatly aggravate their misery; for they will be associated there, not only with each other; but also with the devil and his angels. Matt. xxv. 41.

Of these torments there will be doubtless different degrees; though the very least degree which shall be endured, will be unspeakably dreadful. That there will be degrees of punishment, appears from the words of our Lord, recorded Luke xii. 47, 48.

And what is, of all others, the most terrible consideration, is, that all this dreadful torment will be eternal, or, strictly, without end. That the punishment of the wicked will be eternal, is evident from the following considerations :

The punishment is expressly called everlasting. Our Lord, in the 25th chapter of Matthew, speaking of the day of judgment, when he will separate the wicked and the righteous, says, that they, the wicked, shall go away into everlasting punishment; and Paul, in 1 Thess. i. 9, 10, declares; "who shall be punished with an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

It is declared, in Scripture, not only that the punishment shall be for ever; but for ever and ever. Rev. xiv. 11, xx. 10.

The expression for ever and ever, must certainly mean an infinite duration of time; for the Scripture has no higher expression to signify the eternity of God himself, than that of his being for ever and ever. Rev. iv. 9.

The Scripture says, that wicked men shall not be delivered, till they have paid the uttermost farthing; Matt. v. 26; that is, the utmost that is deserved; and hence all hope of mercy is entirely excluded by this expression.

Again, the Scripture uses the same way of speaking of the eternal happiness of the righteous, or the eternity of God himself; as, for instance, in the 25th chapter of Matthew, it is said that the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous, into life eternal. The words everlasting and eternal, in the original, have the same meaning.

Again, inasmuch as the sinner will not be able to pay the debt due to his sins, seeing he will still increase the debt by a continual sinning, therefore he must necessarily remain in punishment. Neither will the merits of Christ be of any avail, because there will be no sacrifice for sin. All hope of mercy will be cut off. Of Judas, our Lord hath declared, it were better for him, had he not been born. If there had been any hope of Judas's recovery, the Saviour would not have utterly excluded him from mercy.

From these and other arguments, it is evident that the punishment of the wicked will be eternal. It is, however, objected,

That it is not consistent with the justice of God to inflict eternal punishment on wicked men for temporary crimes. But those that make this objection, do not consider that sin is heinous enough to deserve such a punishment, and that such a punishment is no more than proportionate to the evil or demerit of sin. If the evil of sin be infinite, then it is manifest that the punishment is no more than proportionate to the sin punished, and that sin deserves. And if the obligation to love, honour, and obey God, be infinite, then sin is the violation of infinite obligation; and so is an infinite evil deserving of infinite punishment, and therefore not inconsistent with the justice of God.

Again: It is objected, that the eternal duration of hell torments is also inconsistent with the mercy of God. But let us bear in mind that God is not only merciful, but also just and holy. We must not consider the mercy of God as a passion to which his nature is subject, and that God is liable to be moved and affected, and overcome by seeing a creature in misery, so that he cannot bear to see justice executed. Such a notion of God, if true, would argue a great defect, and not a perfection, in the Deity, to be merciful in such a sense that he could not bear to have penal justice executed. To conceive of the mercy of God in this manner, we must conclude that all misery must be contrary to his nature, which we see to be contrary to fact. For we see that God, in his providence, doth indeed inflict very great calamities on mankind even in this life.

But it is further objected, that the phrase *for ever* does not signify an eternal duration of time, but only a long period; as, for instance, "one generation passeth away, and another cometh, but the earth abideth for ever;" that is, until destroyed by fire. Here, then, the word signifies only a long period. Likewise, a servant for ever, is a servant during the longest

period in which he can be a servant; that is, during his life. Also, an ordinance for ever, is an ordinance continuing through the longest time in which it can be an ordinance; as the ordinances of the Mosaic dispensations were. It is granted that the word for ever does not always signify an eternal duration of time, but only a long period. However, when applied to the continuance of things in the future world, it unquestionably denotes an absolute eternity; because the same word, as has been observed, which is used to denote the eternal punishment of the wicked, is also used to express the eternity of God, and the happiness of the righteous. To deny, therefore, the eternal duration of future punishment, is, in fact, to deny the eternity of God, and the everlasting happiness of the people of God.

There are some who allow that the expressions of the threatenings do denote a proper eternity; but then they say, it doth not certainly follow that God will really execute his threatenings. But this would be contrary to the Divine truth, to threaten and not fulfil, and supposes that God is obliged to make use of a fallacy to govern the world; and that, however deep he laid his design, men have been cunning enough to discern the cheat, and defeat the design; because they have found out that there is no necessary connection between the threatening of eternal punishment and the execution of the threatening. The case of Nineveh is often referred to, to show that God may threaten, and not fulfil his threatenings; but we ought to recollect, that the threatening was only conditional. No more was intimated in the threatening, than that Nineveh should be destroyed in forty days, continuing as it was. They repented of their sins, and therefore when the cause was removed, the effect ceased. The threatening of the Ninevites was only conditional; but the threatenings of eternal wrath are positive and absolute.

Having considered the nature and eternal duration of the misery of the wicked in the next world, our attention is next invited to the consideration of the eternal happiness of the righteous.

Various are the names by which this happiness is expressed in Holy Scripture. It is called Heaven and Paradise; it is represented as a place of light, as a house, as a city, as a kingdom; it is called an inheritance, a crown of righteousness; it is expressed by glory itself, a weight of glory; it is called a rest, the joy of the Lord, a fulness of joy, a joy unspeakable and full of glory. It will consist

In a deliverance from all evil, both of soul and body. As it respects the soul, it will be delivered from the greatest of evils, from sin, from all temptation to sin, either from without or within; from the power and dominion of sin, which shall no more bring them to captivity; from the commission of sin, and consequently from the guilt of sin, and the condemnation of the law; yea, from the very being of sin. They will be delivered not only from sin, but from a heart of unbelief, no more to be distressed with doubts and fears; or to complain, with David, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul!* They will be delivered from the evil one—from Satan; for they shall obtain a complete victory over all his temptations, who shall now be cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

This happiness will consist in a deliverance from all bodily evil. As long as believers remain on earth, they are subject to many bodily infirmities—to pain and disease, to sickness and death. But their bodies shall be raised again; and being united to the soul, shall be fashioned like unto the glorious body of the Redeemer. For this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.

This happiness will consist in the possession of all that is good. In the enjoyment of God, who is the chief good; in maintaining communion with the Father, Son, and Spirit; and especially in beholding the glory of the Redeemer, in his Divine and human nature. They shall see him crowned with majesty and glory.

This happiness the righteous shall enjoy in the society of angels, and the saints made perfect. They will unite with them in adoring the Divine perfections, and in praising God and the Lamb. They will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and with other patriarchs — with the prophets and apostles, and all the saints in the kingdom of heaven, and have communion with each other in singing hallelujahs, and in ascribing blessing, honour, and glory, to the sacred and eternal Three.

Once more: This happiness will consist in perfect holiness. Believers are in part sanctified even in this life, and made conformable to the will of God; but so long as they sojourn below, they are, in consequence of indwelling corruptions, ready to exclaim, O, wretched man, who shall deliver me! But in heaven there will be no more complaints of indwelling corruption or indwelling sin; but perfect holiness, so that they will be enabled to love and enjoy God more fully. Yea, to enjoy him, the all-sufficient and ever-blessed God, until they shall be fully satisfied.

From all which will arise the greatest joy and felicity—joy unspeakable and full of glory.

As there will be degrees in the punishment of the wicked, so there will probably be degrees of happiness. Luke xix. However, there will be no want of happiness, nor any desire after more, nor any envying of others; but every one will be truly happy, although there may be different degrees.

There will also, no doubt, be an increase of happiness. As they increase and improve in knowledge, as it respects the mysteries of creation, providence, and redemption, and in the knowledge of God and his adorable perfections, they will increase, like the angels, in happiness.

As the saints in heaven will know one another, and associate and converse with one another, this, too, will contribute towards their happiness.

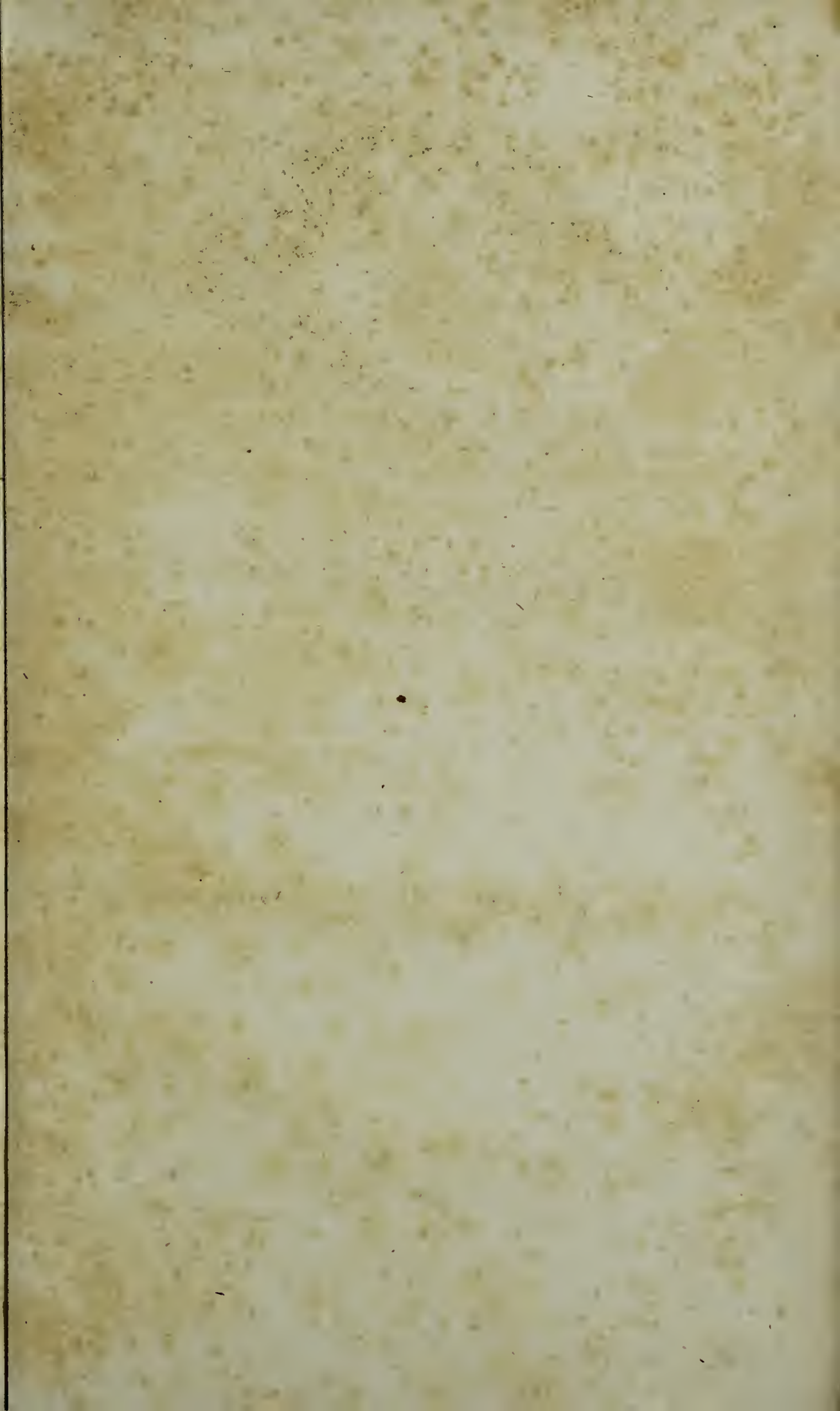
And what crowns all this happiness is, it will be eternal. If the saints had the most distant prospect that, after millions

of millions of ages, this happiness might come to an end, the prospect would greatly diminish their felicity. But it shall never come to an end; for it is "life eternal," "eternal glory," an "eternal weight of glory;" "a crown of glory that fadeth not away," "a house eternal in the heavens," and "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

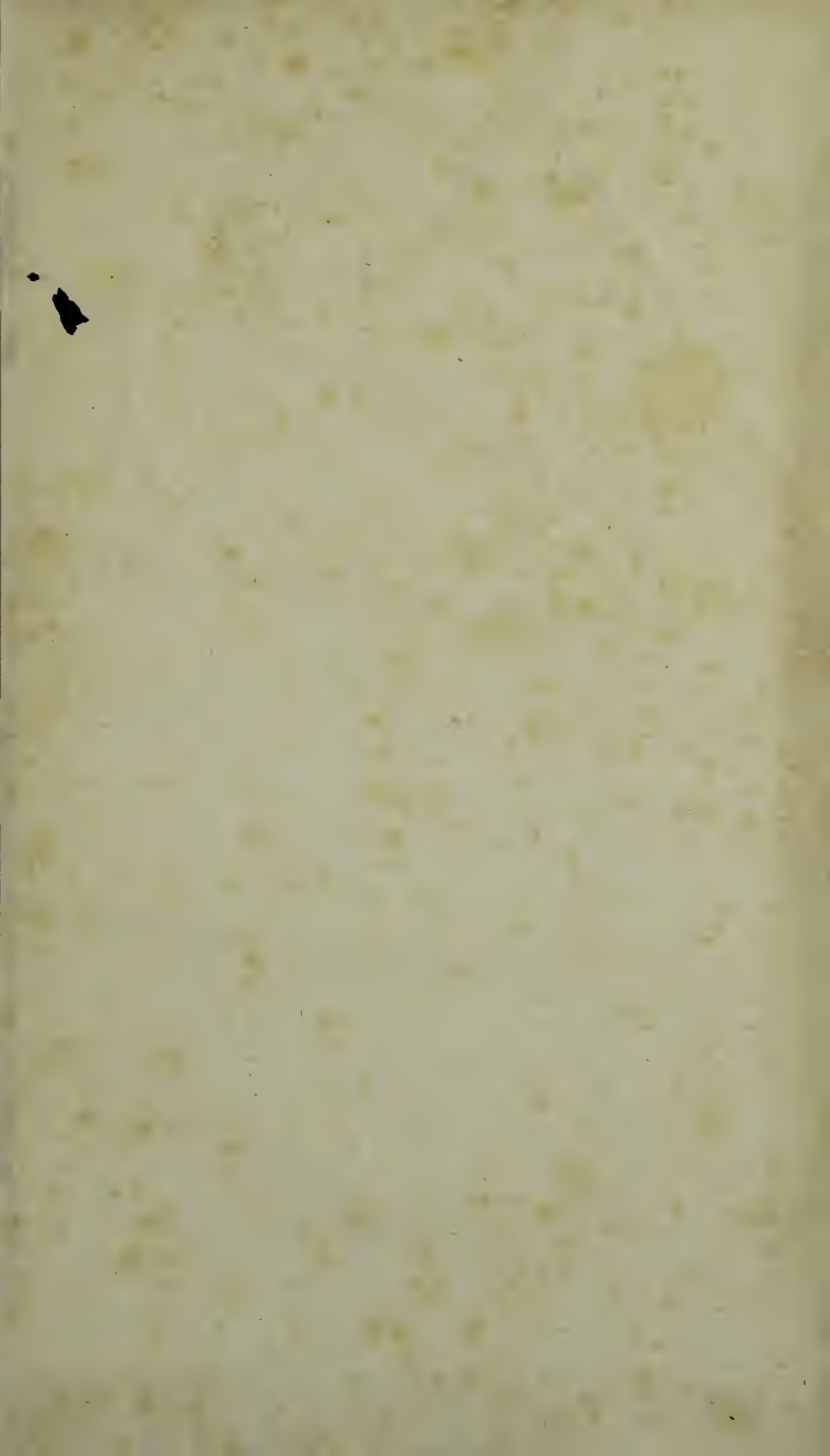
Let us examine ourselves, and compare our character with that to which, in the word of God, this blessedness is promised. If we possess this character, let us rejoice in the hope of glory, and in the prospect of soon having all our trials ended. Having such prospects before us, let us live worthy of our high vocation. Let us live as children of the light, and as children of the King of kings, and heirs of heaven. A few days more, and our warfare will be accomplished, and we shall enter upon the unspeakable glory and happiness of heaven.

Is there such an inheritance laid up in heaven for the saints? How great is the folly of those who neglect it, and who, by their neglect, bring upon themselves not only the loss of heaven, but unspeakable and eternal destruction! May those who have heretofore neglected their future happiness, seriously consider what they are losing, and be persuaded, without delay, to secure an interest in the inheritance of the saints!

THE END.



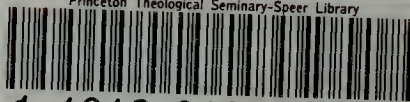




no.

8/—

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01016 6983